CRITICAL MISCELLANIES

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CRITICAL MISCELLANIES

BY

JOHN MORLEY

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ON POPULAR CULTURE.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM (OCTOBER 5, 1876), BY THE WRITER, AS PRESIDENT OF THE MIDLAND INSTITUTE.

THE proceedings which have now been brought satisfactorily to an end are of a kind which nobody who has sensibility as well as sense can take a part in without some emotion. An illustrious French philosopher who happened to be an examiner of candidates for admission to the Polytechnic School, once confessed that, when a youth came before him eager to do his best, competently taught, and of an apt intelligence, he needed all his self-control to press back the tears from his eyes. Well, when we think how much industry, patience, and intelligent discipline; how many hard hours of self-denying toil; how many temptations to worthless pleasures resisted; how much steadfast feeling for things that are honest and true and of good report—are all represented by the young men and young women to whom I have had the honour of giving your prizes to-night, we must all feel our hearts warmed and gladdened in generous

sympathy with so much excellence, so many good hopes, and so honourable a display of those qualities which make life better worth having for ourselves, and are so likely to make the world better worth living in for those who are to come after us.

If a prize-giving is always an occasion of lively satisfaction, my own satisfaction is all the greater at this moment, because your Institute, which is doing such good work in the world, and is in every respect so prosperous and so flourishing, is the creation of the people of your own district, without subsidy and without direction either from London, or from Oxford, or from Cambridge, or from any other centre whatever. Nobody in this town at any rate needs any argument of mine to persuade him that we can only be sure of advancing all kinds of knowledge, and developing our national life in all its plenitude and variety, on condition of multiplying these local centres both of secondary and higher education, and encouraging each of them to fight its own battle, and do its work in its own way. For my own part I look with the utmost dismay at the concentration, not only of population, but of the treasures of instruction, in our vast city on the banks of the Thames. At Birmingham, as I am informed, one has not far to look for an example of this. One of the branches of your multifarious trades in this town is the manufacture of jewellery. Some of it is said commonly to be wanting in taste, elegance, skill; though some of it also—if I am not misinformed—is good enough to

be passed off at Rome and at Paris, even to connoisseurs, as of Roman or French production. Now the nation possesses a most superb collection of all that is excellent and beautiful in jewellers' work. When I say that the nation possesses it, I mean that London possesses it. The University of Oxford, by the way, has also purchased a portion, but that is not at present accessible. If one of your craftsmen in that kind wants to profit by these admirable models, he must go to London. What happens is that he goes to the capital and stays there. Its superficial attractions are too strong for him. You lose a clever workman and a citizen, and he adds one more atom to that huge, overgrown, and unwieldy community. Now, why, in the name of common sense, should not a portion of the Castellani collection pass six months of the year in Birmingham, the very place of all others where it is most likely to be of real service, and to make an effective mark on the national taste?[1]

[1] Sir Henry Cole, C.B., writes to the *Times* (Oct. 13) on this suggestion as follows:—'In justice to the Lords President of the Council on Education, I hope you will allow me the opportunity of stating that from 1855 the Science and Art Department has done its very utmost to induce schools of art to receive deposits of works of art for study and popular examination, and to circulate its choicest objects useful to manufacturing industry. In corroboration of this assertion, please to turn to p. 435 of the twenty-second Report of the Department, just issued. You will there find that upwards of 26,907 objects of art, besides 23,911 paintings and drawings, have been circulated since 1855, and in some cases have been left for several months for exhibition in the localities. They have been seen by more than

To pass on to the more general remarks which you are accustomed to expect from the President of the Institute on this occasion. When I consulted one of your townsmen as to the subject which he thought would be most useful and most interesting to you, he said: 'Pray talk about anything you please, if it is only not Education.' There is a saying that there are two kinds of foolish people in the world, those who give advice, and those who do not take it. My friend and I in this matter represent these two interesting divisions of the race, for in spite of what he said, it is upon Education after all that I propose to offer you some short observations. You will believe it no affectation on my part, when I say that I shall do so with the sincerest willingness to be corrected by those of wider practical experience in teaching. I am well aware, too, that I have very little that is new to say, but education is one of those matters on which

6,000,000 of visitors, besides having been copied by students, etc., and the localities have taken the great sum of £116,182 for showing them.

'The Department besides has tried every efficient means to induce other public institutions, which are absolutely choked with superfluous specimens, to concur in a general principle of circulating the nation's works of art, but without success.

'The chief of our national storehouses of works of art actually repudiates the idea that its objects are collected for purposes of education, and declares that they are only 'things rare and curious,' the very reverse of what common sense says they are.

'Further, the Department, to tempt Schools of Art to acquire objects permanently for art museums attached to them, offered a grant in aid of 50 per cent of the cost price of the objects.'

much that has already been said will long bear saying over and over again.

I have been looking through the Report of your classes, and two things have rather struck me, which I will mention. One of them is the very large attendance in the French classes. This appears a singularly satisfactory thing, because you could scarcely do a hard-working man of whatever class a greater service than to give him easy access to French literature. Montesquieu used to say that he had never known a pain or a distress which he could not soothe by half an hour of a good book; and perhaps it is no more of an exaggeration to say that a man who can read French with comfort need never have a dull hour. Our own literature has assuredly many a kingly name. In boundless riches and infinite imaginative variety, there is no rival to Shakespeare in the world; in energy and height and majesty Milton and Burke have no masters. But besides its great men of this loftier sort, France has a long list of authors who have produced a literature whose chief mark is its agreeableness. As has been so often said, the genius of the French language is its clearness, firmness, and order; to this clearness certain circumstances in the history of French society have added the delightful qualities of liveliness in union with urbanity. Now as one of the most important parts of popular education is to put people in the way of amusing and refreshing themselves in a rational rather than an irrational manner, it is a great gain to have given

them the key to the most amusing and refreshing set of books in the world.

And here, perhaps, I may be permitted to remark that it seems a pity that Racine is so constantly used as a school-book, instead of some of the moderns who are nearer to ourselves in ideas and manners. Racine is a great and admirable writer; but what you want for ordinary readers who have not much time, and whose faculties of attention are already largely exhausted by the more important industry of the day, is a book which brings literature more close to actual life than such a poet as Racine does. This is exactly one of the gifts and charms of modern French. To put what I mean very shortly, I would say, by way of illustration, that a man who could read the essays of Ste. Beuve with moderate comfort would have in his hands—of course I am now speaking of the active and busy part of the world, not of bookmen and students—would, I say, have in his hands one of the very best instruments that I can think of; such work is exquisite and instructive in itself, it is a model of gracious writing, it is full of ideas, it breathes the happiest moods over us, and it is the most suggestive of guides, for those who have the capacity of extensive interests, to all the greater spheres of thought and history.

This word brings me back to the second fact that has struck me in your Report, and it is this. The subject of English history has apparently so little popularity, that the class is as near being a failure as

anything connected with the Midland Institute can be. On the whole, whatever may be the ability and the zeal of the teacher, this is in my humble judgment neither very surprising nor particularly mortifying, if we think what history in the established conception of it means. How are we to expect workmen to make their way through constitutional antiquities, through the labyrinthine shifts of party intrigue at home, and through the entanglements of intricate diplomacy abroad—'shallow village tales,' as Emerson calls them? These studies are fit enough for professed students of the special subject, but such exploration is for the ordinary run of men and women impossible, and I do not know that it would lead them into very fruitful lands even if it were easy. You know what the great Duke of Marlborough said: that he had learnt all the history he ever knew out of Shakespeare's historical plays. I have long thought that if we persuaded those classes who have to fight their own little Battles of Blenheim for bread every day, to make such a beginning of history as is furnished by Shakespeare's plays and Scott's novels, we should have done more to imbue them with a real interest in the past of mankind, than if we had taken them through a course of Hume and Smollett, or Hallam on the English Constitution, or even the dazzling Macaulay. What I for one should like to see in such an institution as this, would be an attempt to compress the whole history of England into a dozen or fifteen lectures—lectures of course accompanied by

catechetical instruction. I am not so extravagant as to dream that a short general course of this kind would be enough to go over so many of the details as it is desirable for men to know, but details in popular instruction, though not in study of the writer or the university professor, are only important after you have imparted the largest general truths. It is the general truths that stir a life-like curiosity as to the particulars which they are the means of lighting up. Now this short course would be quite enough to present in a bold outline—and it need not be a whit the less true and real for being both bold and rapid—the great chains of events and the decisive movements that have made of ourselves and our institutions what we and what they are—the Teutonic beginnings, the Conquest, the Great Charter, the Hundred Years' War, the Reformation, the Civil Wars and the Revolution, the Emancipation of the American Colonies from the Monarchy. If this course were framed and filled in with a true social intelligence—men would find that they had at the end of it a fair idea—an idea that might be of great value, and at any rate an idea much to be preferred to that blank ignorance which is in so many cases practically the only alternative—of the large issues of our past, of the antagonistic principles that strove with one another for mastery, of the chief material forces and moral currents of successive ages, and above all of those great men and our fathers that begat us—the Pyms, the Hampdens, the Cromwells, the Chathams

—yes, and shall we not say the Washingtons — to whose sagacity, bravery, and unquenchable ardour for justice and order and equal laws all our English-speaking peoples owe a debt that can never be paid.

Another point is worth thinking of, besides the reduction of history for your purposes to a comprehensive body of rightly grouped generalities. Dr. Arnold says somewhere that he wishes the public might have a history of our present state of society *traced backwards*. It is the present that really interests us; it is the present that we seek to understand and to explain. I do not in the least want to know what happened in the past, except as it enables me to see my way more clearly through what is happening to-day. I want to know what men thought and did in the thirteenth century, not out of any dilettante or idle antiquarian's curiosity, but because the thirteenth century is at the root of what men think and do in the nineteenth. Well then, it cannot be a bad educational rule to start from what is most interesting, and to work from that outwards and backwards. By beginning with the present we see more clearly what are the two things best worth attending to in history —not party intrigues nor battles nor dynastic affairs, nor even many acts of parliament, but the great movements of the economic forces of a society on the one hand, and on the other the forms of religious opinion and ecclesiastical organisation. All the rest are important, but their importance is subsidiary.

Allow me to make one more remark on this subject. If a dozen or a score of wise lectures would suffice for a general picture of the various phases through which our own society has passed, there ought to be added to the course of popular instruction as many lectures more, which should trace the history, not of England, but of the world. And the history of the world ought to go before the history of England. This is no paradox, but the deliberate opinion of many of those who have thought most deeply about the far-reaching chain of human progress. When I was on a visit to the United States some years ago—things may have improved since then—I could not help noticing that the history classes in their common schools all began their work with the year 1776, when the American colonies formed themselves into an independent confederacy. The teaching assumed that the creation of the universe occurred about that date. What could be more absurd, more narrow and narrowing, more mischievously misleading as to the whole purport and significance of history? As if the laws, the representative institutions, the religious uses, the scientific methods, the moral ideas, which give to an American citizen his character and mental habits and social surroundings, had not all their roots in the deeds and thoughts of wise and brave men, who lived in centuries which are of course just as much the inheritance of the vast continent of the West as they are of the little island from whence its first colonisers sailed forth.

Well, there is something nearly as absurd, if not quite, in our common plan of taking for granted that people should begin their reading of history, not in 1776, but in 1066. As if this could bring into our minds what is after all the greatest lesson of history, namely, the fact of its oneness; of the interdependence of all the elements that have in the course of long ages made the European of to-day what we see him to be. It is no doubt necessary for clear and definite comprehension to isolate your phenomenon, and to follow the stream of our own history separately. But that cannot be enough. We must also see that this stream is the effluent of a far broader and mightier flood—whose springs and sources and great tributaries lay higher up in the history of mankind.

'We are learning,' says Mr. Freeman, whose little book on the *Unity of History* I cannot be wrong in warmly recommending even to the busiest among you, 'that European history, from its first glimmerings to our own day, is one unbroken drama, no part of which can be rightly understood without reference to the other parts which come before and after it. We are learning that of this great drama Rome is the centre, the point to which all roads lead and from which all roads lead no less. The world of independent Greece stands on one side of it; the world of modern Europe stands on another. But the history alike of the great centre itself, and of its satellites on either side, can never be fully grasped except from a point of view wide enough to take in the whole group, and

to mark the relations of each of its members to the centre and to one another.'

Now the counsel which our learned historian thus urges upon the scholar and the leisured student, equally represents the point of view which is proper for the more numerous classes of whom we are thinking to-night. The scale will have to be reduced; all save the very broadest aspects of things will have to be left out; none save the highest ranges and the streams of most copious volume will find a place in that map. Small as is the scale and many as are its omissions, yet if a man has intelligently followed the very shortest course of universal history, it will be the fault of his teacher if he has not acquired an impressive conception, which will never be effaced, of the destinies of man upon the earth; of the mighty confluence of forces working on from age to age, which have their meeting in every one of us here to-night; of the order in which each state of society has followed its foregoer, according to great and changeless laws 'embracing all things and all times;' of the thousand faithful hands that have one after another, each in their several degrees, orders, and capacities, trimmed the silver lamp of knowledge and kept its sacred flame bright from generation to generation and age to age, now in one land and now in another, from its early spark among far-off dim Chaldeans down to Goethe and Faraday and Darwin and all the other good workers of our own day.

The shortest course of universal history will let him see how he owes to the Greek civilisation, on the shores of the Mediterranean two thousand years back, a debt extending from the architectural forms of this very Town Hall to some of the most systematic operations of his own mind; will let him see the forum of Rome, its roads and its gates—

> What conflux issuing forth or entering in,
> Prætors, Proconsuls to their provinces
> Hasting or on return, in robes of state—

all busily welding an empire together in a marvellous framework of citizenship, manners, and laws, that laid assured foundations for a still higher civilisation that was to come after. He will learn how when the Roman Empire declined, then at Damascus and Bagdad and Seville the Mahometan conquerors took up the torch of science and learning, and handed it on to western Europe when the new generations were ready. He will learn how in the meantime, during ages which we both wrongly and ungratefully call dark, from Rome again, that other great organisation, the mediæval Church, had arisen, which amid many imperfections and some crimes did a work that no glory of physical science can equal, and no instrument of physical science can compass, in purifying men's appetites, in setting discipline and direction on their lives, and in offering to humanity new types of moral obligation and fairer ideals of saintly perfection, whose light still shines like a star to guide our own poor voyages. It is only by this contemplation of

the life of our race as a whole that men see the beginnings and the ends of things; learn not to be near-sighted in history, but to look before and after; see their own part and lot in the rising up and going down of empires and faiths since first recorded time began; and what I am contending for is that even if you can take your young men and women no farther than the mere vestibule of this ancient and ever venerable Temple of many marvels, you will have opened to them the way to a kind of knowledge that not only enlightens the understanding, but enriches the character—which is a higher thing than mere intellect—and makes it constantly alive with the spirit of beneficence.

I know it is said that such a view of collective history is true, but that you will never get plain people to respond to it; it is a thing for intellectual dilettanti and moralising virtuosi. Well, we do not know, because we have never yet honestly tried, what the commonest people will or will not respond to. When Sir Richard Wallace's pictures were being exhibited at Bethnal Green, after people had said that the workers had no souls for art and would not appreciate its treasures, a story is told of a female in very poor clothes gazing intently at a picture of the Infant Jesus in the arms of his Mother, and then exclaiming, '*Who would not try to be a good woman, who had such a child as that?*' We have never yet, I say, tried the height and pitch to which our people are capable of rising.

I have thought it well to take this opportunity of saying a word for history, because I cannot help thinking that one of the most narrow, and what will eventually be one of the most impoverishing, characteristics of our day is the excessive supremacy claimed for physical science. This is partly due, no doubt, to a most wholesome reaction against the excessive supremacy that has hitherto been claimed for literature, and held by literature, in our schools and universities. At the same time, it is well to remember that the historic sciences are making strides not unworthy of being compared with those of the physical sciences, and not only is there room for both, but any system is radically wrong which excludes or depresses either to the advantage of the other.[1]

And now there is another idea which I should like to throw out, if you will not think it too tedious and too special. It is an old saying that, after all, the great end and aim of the British Constitution is to get twelve honest men into a box. That is really a very sensible way of putting the theory, that the first

[1] A very eminent physicist writes to me on this passage: 'I cannot help smiling when I think of the place of physical science in the endowed schools,' etc. My reference was to the great prevalence of such assertions as that human progress depends upon increase of our knowledge of the conditions of material phenomena (Dr. Draper, for instance, lays this down as a fundamental axiom of history): as if moral advance, the progressive elevation of types of character and ethical ideals were not at least an equally important cause of improvement in civilisation. The type of Saint Vincent de Paul is plainly as indispensable to progress as the type of Newton.

end of government is to give security to life and property, and to make people keep their contracts. But with this view it is not only important that you should get twelve honest men into a box: the twelve honest men must have in their heads some notions as to what constitutes Evidence. Now it is surely a striking thing that while we are so careful to teach physical science and literature; while men want to be endowed in order to have leisure to explore our spinal cords, and to observe the locomotor system of Medusæ—and I have no objection against those who urge on all these studies—yet there is no systematic teaching, very often no teaching at all, in the principles of Evidence and Reasoning, even for the bulk of those who would be very much offended if we were to say that they are not educated. Of course I use the term evidence in a wider sense than the testimony in crimes and contracts, and the other business of courts of law. Questions of evidence are rising at every hour of the day. As Bentham says, it is a question of evidence with the cook whether the joint of meat is roasted enough. It has been excellently said that the principal and most characteristic difference between one human intellect and another consists in their ability to judge correctly of evidence. Most of us, Mr. Mill says, are very unsafe hands at estimating evidence, if appeal cannot be made to actual eyesight. Indeed, if we think of some of the tales that have been lately diverting the British Association, we might perhaps go farther, and describe

many of us as very bad hands at estimating evidence, even where appeal can be made to actual eyesight. Eyesight, in fact, is the least part of the matter. The senses are as often the tools as the guides of reason. One of the longest chapters in the history of vulgar error would contain the cases in which the eyes have only seen what old prepossessions inspired them to see, and were blind to all that would have been fatal to the prepossessions. 'It is beyond all question or dispute,' says Voltaire, 'that magic words and ceremonies are quite capable of most effectually destroying a whole flock of sheep, if the words be accompanied by a sufficient quantity of arsenic.' Sorcery has no doubt been exploded—at least we assume that it has—but the temper that made men attribute all the efficacy to the magic words, and entirely overlook the arsenic, still prevails in a great host of moral and political affairs, into which it is not convenient to enter here. The stability of a government, for instance, is constantly set down to some ornamental part of it, when in fact the ornamental part has no more to do with stability than the incantations of the soothsayer.

You have heard, again, that for many generations the people of the Isle of St. Kilda believed that the arrival of a ship in the harbour inflicted on the islanders epidemic colds in the head, and many ingenious reasons were from time to time devised by clever men why the ship should cause colds among the population. At last it occurred to somebody that the ship might not be the cause of the colds, but that

both might be the common effects of some other cause, and it was then remembered that a ship could only enter the harbour when there was a strong north-east wind blowing.

However faithful the observation, as soon as ever a man uses words he may begin at that moment to go wrong. 'A village apothecary,' it has been said, 'and if possible in a still greater degree, an experienced nurse, is seldom able to describe the plainest case without employing a phraseology of which every word is a theory; the simplest narrative of the most illiterate observer involves more or less of hypothesis;' —yet both by the observer himself and by most of those who listen to him, each of these conjectural assumptions is treated as respectfully as if it were an established axiom. We are supposed to deny the possibility of a circumstance, when in truth we only deny the evidence alleged for it. We allow the excellence of reasoning from certain data to captivate our belief in the truth of the data themselves, even when they are unproved and unprovable. There is no end, in short, of the ways in which men habitually go wrong in their reasoning, tacit or expressed. The greatest boon that any benefactor could confer on the human race would be to teach men—and especially women—to quantify their propositions. It sometimes seems as if Swift were right when he said that Mankind were just as fit for flying as for thinking.

Now it is quite true that mother-wit and the common experiences of life do often furnish people

with a sort of shrewd and sound judgment that carries them very creditably through the world. They come to good conclusions, though perhaps they would give bad reasons for them, if they were forced to find their reasons. But you cannot count upon mother-wit in everybody; perhaps not even in a majority. And then as for the experience of life,—there are a great many questions, and those of the deepest ultimate importance to mankind, in which the ordinary experience of life sheds no light, until it has been interrogated and interpreted by men with trained minds. 'It is far easier,' as has been said, 'to acquire facts than to judge what they prove.' What is done in our systems of training to teach people how to judge what facts prove? There is Mathematics, no doubt; anybody who has done even no more than the first book of Euclid's geometry, ought to have got into his head the notion of a demonstration, of the rigorously close connection between a conclusion and its premisses, of the necessity of being able to show how each link in the chain comes to be where it is, and that it has a right to be there. This, however, is a long way from the facts of real life, and a man might well be a great geometer, and still be a thoroughly bad reasoner in practical questions.

Again, in other of your classes, in Chemistry, in Astronomy, in Natural History, besides acquiring groups of facts, the student has a glimpse of the method by which they were discovered, of the type of inference to which the discovery conforms, so that

the discovery of a new comet, the detection of a new species, the invention of a new chemical compound, each becomes a lesson of the most beautiful and impressive kind in the art of reasoning. And it would be superfluous and impertinent for me here to point out how valuable such lessons are in the way of mental discipline, apart from the fruit they bear in other ways. But here again the relation to the judgments we have to form in the moral, political, practical sphere, is too remote and too indirect. The judgments, in this region, of the most brilliant and successful explorers in physical science, seem to be exactly as liable to every kind of fallacy as those of other people. The application of scientific method and conception to society is yet in its infancy, and the *Novum Organum* or the *Principia* of moral and social phenomena will perhaps not be wholly disclosed to any of us now alive. In any case it is clear that for the purposes of such an institution as this, if the rules of evidence and proof and all the other safeguards for making your propositions true and relevant, are to be taught at all, they must be taught not only in an elementary form, but with illustrations that shall convey their own direct reference and application to practical life. If everybody could find time to master Mill's *Logic* or so instructive and interesting a book as Professor Jevons's *Principles of Science*, a certain number at any rate of the bad mental habits of people would be cured; and for those of you here who have leisure enough, and want to find a worthy keystone

of your culture, it would be hard to find a better thing to do for the next six months than to work through one or both of the books I have just named —pen in hand. The ordinary text-books of formal logic do not seem to meet the special aim which I am now trying to impress as desirable—namely, the habit of valuing, not merely speculative nor scientific truth, but the truth of practical life; a practising of the intellect in forming and expressing the opinions and judgments that form the staple of our daily discourse.

It is now accepted that the most effective way of learning a foreign language is to begin by reading books written in it, or by conversing in it—and then after a certain empirical familiarity with vocabulary and construction has been acquired, one may proceed to master the grammar. Just in the same way it would seem to be the best plan to approach the art of practical reasoning in concrete examples, in cases of actual occurrence and living interest; and then after the processes of disentangling a complex group of propositions, of dividing and shifting, of scenting a fallacy, have all become familiar, it may be worth while to find names for them all, and to set out rules for reasoning rightly, just as in the former illustration the rules of writing correctly follow a certain practice rather than precede it.

Now it has long seemed to me that the best way of teaching carefulness and precision in dealing with propositions might be found through the medium of

the argumentation in the courts of justice. This is reasoning in real matter. There is a famous book well known to legal students—*Smith's Leading Cases*—which contains a selection of important decisions, and sets forth the grounds on which the courts arrived at them. I have often thought that a dozen or a score of cases might be collected from this book into a small volume, that would make such a manual as no other matter could, for opening plain men's eyes to the logical pitfalls among which they go stumbling and crashing, when they think they are disputing like Socrates or reasoning like Newton. They would see how a proposition or an expression that looks straightforward and unmistakable, is yet on examination found to be capable of bearing several distinct interpretations and meaning several distinct things; how the same evidence may warrant different conclusions, and what kinds of evidence carry with them what degrees of validity: how certain sorts of facts can only be proved in one way, and certain other sorts of facts in some other way: how necessary it is, before you set out, to know exactly what it is you intend to show, or what it is you intend to dispute; how there may be many argumentative objections to a proposition, yet the balance be in favour of its adoption. It is from the generality of people having neglected to practise the attention on these and the like matters, that interest and prejudice find so ready an instrument of sophistry in that very art of speech which ought to be the organ of reason and truth. To bring

the matter to a point, then, I submit that it might be worth while in this and all such institutions to have a class for the study of Logic, Reasoning, Evidence, and that such a class might well find its best material in selections from Leading Cases, and from Bentham's *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*, elucidated by those special sections in Mill's *Logic*, or smaller manuals such as those of Mr. Fowler, the Oxford Professor of Logic, which treat of the department of Fallacies. Perhaps Bentham's *Book of Fallacies* is too political for me to commend it to you here. But if there happens to be any one in Birmingham who is fond of meeting proposed changes by saying that they are Utopian; that they are good in theory, but bad in practice; that they are too good to be realised, and so forth, then I can promise him that he will in that book hear of something very much to his advantage.[1]

An incidental advantage—which is worth mentioning—of making legal instances the medium of instruction in practical logic, would be that people would—

[1] This suggestion has fortunately found favour in a quarter where shrewd and critical common sense is never wanting. The *Economist* (Oct. 14) writes:—'Such a text-book commented on to a class by a man trained to estimate the value of evidence, would form a most valuable study, and not, we should imagine, at all less fascinating than valuable. Of course the class suggested would not be a class in English law, but in the principles on which evidence should be estimated, and the special errors to which, in common life, average minds are most liable. We regard this suggestion as a most useful one, and as one which would not only greatly contribute to the educational worth of an institute for adults, but also to its popularity.'

not learn law, of course, in the present state of our system, but they would have their attention called in a direct and business-like way to the lawyer's point of view, and those features of procedure in which every man and woman in the land has so immediate an interest. Perhaps if people interested themselves more seriously than is implied by reading famous cases in the newspapers, we should get rid, for one thing, of the rule which makes the accused person in a criminal case incompetent to testify; and, for another, of that infamous license of cross-examination to credit, which is not only barbarous to those who have to submit to it, but leads to constant miscarriage of justice in the case of those who, rather than submit to it, will suffer wrong.

It will be said, I daresay, that overmuch scruple about our propositions and the evidence for them will reduce men, especially the young, to the intellectual condition of the great philosopher, Marphurius, in Molière's comedy. Marphurius rebukes Sganarelle for saying he had come into the room;—'What you should say is, that it *seems* I am come into the room.' Instead of the downright affirmations and burly negations so becoming to Britons, he would bring down all our propositions to the attenuation of a possibility or a perhaps. We need not fear such an end. The exigencies of practical affairs will not allow this endless balancing. They are always driving men to the other extreme, making us like the new judge, who first heard the counsel on one side and made up

his mind on the merits of the case, until the turn of the opposing counsel came, and then the new counsel filled the judge with so many doubts and perplexities, that he suddenly vowed that nothing would induce him to pay any heed to evidence again as long as he lived.

I do not doubt that I shall be blamed in what I have said about French, and about history, for encouraging a spirit of superficiality, and of contentment with worthless smatterings of things. To this I should answer that, as Archbishop Whately pointed out long ago, it is a fallacy to mistake general truths for superficial truths, or a knowledge of the leading propositions of a subject for a superficial knowledge. 'To have a general knowledge of a subject is to know only its leading truths, but to know these thoroughly, so as to have a true conception of the subject in its great features' (*Mill*). And I need not point out that instruction may be of the most general kind, and still possess that most important quality of all instruction—namely, being *methodical*.

I think popular instruction has been made much more repulsive than it need have been, and more repulsive than it ought to have been, because those who have had the control of the movement for the last fifty years, have been too anxious to make the type of popular instruction conform to the type of academic instruction proper to learned men. The principles of instruction have been too rigorously

ascetic and puritanical, and instead of making the access to knowledge as easy as possible, we have delighted in forcing every pilgrim to make his journey to the shrine of the Muses with a hair-shirt on his back and peas in his shoes. Nobody would say that Macaulay had a superficial knowledge of the things best worth knowing in ancient literature, yet we have his own confession that when he became a busy man —as you are all busy—then he read his classics, not like a collegian, but like a man of the world; if he did not know a word, he passed it over, and if a passage refused to give up its meaning at the second reading, then he let it alone. Now the aims of academic education and those of popular education are—it is obvious if you come to think of it—quite different. The end of the one is rather to increase knowledge: of the other to diffuse it, and to increase men's interest in what is already known. If, therefore, I am for making certain kinds of instruction as general as they can possibly be made in these local centres, I should give to the old seats of learning a very special function indeed.

It would be absurd to attempt to discuss academic organisation here, at this hour. I only want to ask you as politicians whose representatives in parliament will ultimately settle the matter—to reflect whether the money now consumed in idle fellowships might not be more profitably employed in endowing inquirers. The favourite argument of those who support prize fellowships is that they are the only

means by which a child of the working-class can raise himself to the highest positions in the land. My answer to this would be that, in the first place, it is of questionable expediency to invite the cleverest members of any class to leave it—instead of making their abilities available in it, and so raising the whole class along with, and by means of, their own rise. Second, these prize fellowships will continue, and must continue, to be carried off by those who can afford time and money to educate their sons for the competition. Third, I doubt the expediency—and the history of Oxford within the last twenty-five years strikingly confirms this doubt—of giving to a young man of any class what is practically a premium on indolence, and the removal of a motive to self-reliant and energetic spirit of enterprise. The best thing that I can think of as happening to a young man is this: that he should have been educated at a day-school in his own town; that he should have opportunities of following also the higher education in his own town; and that at the earliest convenient time he should be taught to earn his own living.

The Universities might then be left to their proper business of study. Knowledge for its own sake is clearly an object which only a very small portion of society can be spared to pursue; only a very few men in a generation have that devouring passion for knowing, which is the true inspirer of fruitful study and exploration. Even if the passion were more common than it is, the world could not afford on any

very large scale that men should indulge in it: the great business of the world has to be carried on. One of the greatest of all hindrances to making things better is the habit of taking for granted that plans or ideas, simply because they are different and approach the matter from different sides, are therefore the rivals and enemies, instead of being the friends and complements of one another. But a great and wealthy society like ours ought very well to be able to nourish one or two great seats for the augmentation of true learning, and at the same time make sure that young men—and again I say, especially young women—should have good education of the higher kind within reach of their own hearths.

It is not necessary for me here, I believe, to dwell upon any of the great commonplaces which the follower of knowledge does well to keep always before his eyes, and which represent the wisdom of many generations of studious experience. You may have often heard from others, or may have found out, how good it is to have on your shelves, however scantily furnished they may be, three or four of those books to which it is well to give ten minutes every morning, before going down into the battle and choking dust of the day. Men will name these books for themselves. One will choose the Bible, another Goethe, one the *Imitation of Christ*, another Wordsworth. Perhaps it matters little what it be, so long as your writer has cheerful seriousness, elevation,

calm, and, above all, a sense of size and strength, which shall open out the day before you and bestow gifts of fortitude and mastery.

Then, to turn to the intellectual side. You know as well as I or any one can tell you, that knowledge is worth little until you have made it so perfectly your own, as to be capable of reproducing it in precise and definite form. Goethe said that in the end we only retain of our studies, after all, what we practically employ of them. And it is at least well that in our serious studies we should have the possibility of practically turning them to a definite destination clearly before our eyes. Nobody can be sure that he has got clear ideas on a subject, unless he has tried to put them down on a piece of paper in independent words of his own. It is an excellent plan, too, when you have read a good book, to sit down and write a short abstract of what you can remember of it. It is a still better plan, if you can make up your minds to a slight extra labour, to do what Lord Strafford, and Gibbon, and Daniel Webster did. After glancing over the title, subject, or design of a book, these eminent men would take a pen and write roughly what questions they expected to find answered in it, what difficulties solved, what kind of information imparted. Such practices keep us from reading with the eye only, gliding vaguely over the page; and they help us to *place* our new acquisitions in relation with what we knew before. It is almost always worth while to read a thing twice over, to make sure that nothing

has been missed or dropped on the way, or wrongly conceived or interpreted. And if the subject be serious, it is often well to let an interval elapse. Ideas, relations, statements of fact, are not to be taken by storm. We have to steep them in the mind, in the hope of thus extracting their inmost essence and significance. If one lets an interval pass, and then returns, it is surprising how clear and ripe that has become, which, when we left it, seemed crude, obscure, full of perplexity.

All this takes trouble, no doubt, but then it will not do to deal with ideas that we find in books or elsewhere as a certain bird does with its eggs—leave them in the sand for the sun to hatch and chance to rear. People who follow this plan possess nothing better than ideas half-hatched, and convictions reared by accident. They are like a man who should pace up and down the world in the delusion that he is clad in sumptuous robes of purple and velvet, when in truth he is only half-covered by the rags and tatters of other people's cast-off clothes.

Apart from such mechanical devices as these I have mentioned, there are habits and customary attitudes of mind which a conscientious reader will practise, if he desires to get out of a book still greater benefits than the writer of it may have designed or thought of. For example, he should never be content with mere aggressive and negatory criticism of the page before him. The page may be open to such criticism, and in that case it is natural to indulge in

it; but the reader will often find an unexpected profit by asking himself—What does this error teach me? How comes that fallacy to be here? How came the writer to fall into this defect of taste? To ask such questions gives a reader a far healthier tone of mind in the long run, more seriousness, more depth, more moderation of judgment, more insight into other men's ways of thinking as well as into his own, than any amount of impatient condemnation and hasty denial, even when both condemnation and denial may be in their place.

Again, let us not be too ready to detect an inconsistency in our author, but rather let us teach ourselves to distinguish between inconsistency and having two sides to an opinion. 'Before I admit that two and two are four,' some one said, 'I must first know to what use you are going to put the proposition.' That is to say, even the plainest proposition needs to be stated with a view to the drift of the discussion in hand, or with a view to some special part of the discussion. When the turn of some other part of the matter comes, it will be convenient and often necessary to bring out into full light another side of your opinion, not contradictory, but complementary, and the great distinction of a candid disputant or of a reader of good faith, is his willingness to take pains to see the points of reconciliation among different aspects and different expressions of what is substantially the same judgment.

Then, again, nobody here needs to be reminded

that the great successes of the world have been affairs of a second, a third, nay, a fiftieth trial. The history of literature, of science, of art, of industrial achievements, all testify to the truth that success is only the last term of what looked like a series of failures. What is true of the great achievements of history, is true also of the little achievements of the observant cultivator of his own understanding. If a man is despondent about his work, the best remedy that I can prescribe to him is to turn to a good biography; there he will find that other men before him have known the dreary reaction that follows long-sustained effort, and he will find that one of the differences between the first-rate man and the fifth-rate lies in the vigour with which the first-rate man recovers from this reaction, and crushes it down, and again flings himself once more upon the breach. I remember the wisest and most virtuous man I have ever known, or am ever likely to know—Mr. Mill—once saying to me that whenever he had written anything, he always felt profoundly dissatisfied with it, and it was only by reflecting that he had felt the same about other pieces of which the world had thought well, that he could bring himself to send the new production to the printer. The heroism of the scholar and the truth-seeker is not less admirable than the heroism of the man-at-arms.

Finally, you none of you need to be reminded of the most central and important of all the commonplaces of the student—that the stuff of which life is

made is Time; that it is better, as Goethe said, to do the most trifling thing in the world than to think half an hour a trifling thing. Nobody means by this that we are to have no pleasures. Where time is lost and wasted is where many people lose and waste their money—in things that are neither pleasure nor business—in those random and officious sociabilities, which neither refresh nor instruct nor invigorate, but only fret and benumb and wear all edge off the mind. All these things, however, you have all of you often thought about; yet, alas, we are so ready to forget, both in these matters and in other and weightier, how irrevocable are our mistakes.

> The moving Finger writes, and having writ,
> Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit
> Can lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all your tears wipe out a word of it.

And now I think I cannot ask you to listen any longer. I will only add that these ceremonial anniversaries, when they are over, sometimes slightly tend to depress us, unless we are on our guard. When the prizes of the year are all distributed, and the address is at an end, we perhaps ask ourselves, Well, and what then? It is not to be denied that the expectations of the first fervent promoters of popular instruction by such Institutes as this—of men like Lord Brougham and others, a generation ago—were not fulfilled. The principal reason was that the elementary instruction of the country was not then sufficiently advanced to supply a population ready to

take advantage of education in the higher subjects. Well, we are in a fair way for removing that obstacle. It is true that the old world moves tardily on its arduous way, but even if the results of all our efforts in the cause of education were smaller than they are, there are still two considerations that ought to weigh with us and encourage us.

For one thing, you never know what child in rags and pitiful squalor that meets you in the street, may have in him the germ of gifts that might add new treasures to the storehouse of beautiful things or noble acts. In that great storm of terror which swept over France in 1793, a certain man who was every hour expecting to be led off to the guillotine, uttered this memorable sentiment. 'Even at this incomprehensible moment'—he said—'when morality, enlightenment, love of country, all of them only make death at the prison-door or on the scaffold more certain—yes, on the fatal tumbrel itself, with nothing free but my voice, I could still cry *Take care*, to a child that should come too near the wheel; perhaps I may save his life, perhaps he may one day save his country.' This is a generous and inspiring thought—one to which the roughest-handed man or woman in Birmingham may respond as honestly and heartily as the philosopher who wrote it. It ought to shame the listlessness with which so many of us see the great phantasmagoria of life pass before us.

There is another thought to encourage us, still more direct, and still more positive. The boisterous

old notion of hero-worship, which has been preached by so eloquent a voice in our age, is after all now seen to be a half-truth, and to contain the less edifying and the less profitable half of the truth. The world will never be able to spare its hero, and the man with the rare and inexplicable gift of genius will always be as commanding a figure as he has ever been. What we see every day with increasing clearness is that not only the wellbeing of the many, but the chances of exceptional genius, moral or intellectual, in the gifted few, are highest in a society where the *average* interest, curiosity, capacity, are all highest. The moral of this for you and for me is plain. We cannot, like Beethoven or Handel, lift the soul by the magic of divine melody into the seventh heaven of ineffable vision and hope incommensurable; we cannot, like Newton, weigh the far-off stars in a balance, and measure the heavings of the eternal flood; we cannot, like Voltaire, scorch up what is cruel and false by a word as a flame, nor, like Milton or Burke, awaken men's hearts with the note of an organ-trumpet; we cannot, like the great saints of the churches and the great sages of the schools, add to those acquisitions of spiritual beauty and intellectual mastery which have, one by one, and little by little, raised man from being no higher than the brute to be only a little lower than the angels. But what we can do—the humblest of us in this great hall—is by diligently using our own minds and diligently seeking to extend our own opportunities to others, to help to

swell that common tide, on the force and the set of whose currents depends the prosperous voyaging of humanity. When our names are blotted out, and our place knows us no more, the energy of each social service will remain, and so too, let us not forget, will each social disservice remain, like the unending stream of one of nature's forces. The thought that this is so may well lighten the poor perplexities of our daily life, and even soothe the pang of its calamities; it lifts us from our feet as on wings, opening a larger meaning to our private toil and a higher purpose to our public endeavour; it makes the morning as we awake to it welcome, and the evening like a soft garment as it wraps us about; it nerves our arm with boldness against oppression and injustice, and strengthens our voice with deeper accents against falsehood, while we are yet in the full noon of our days—yes, and perhaps it will shed some ray of consolation, when our eyes are growing dim to it all, and we go down into the Valley of the Dark Shadow.

THE DEATH OF MR. MILL.

(*May* 1873.)

THE tragic commonplaces of the grave sound a fuller note as we mourn for one of the greater among the servants of humanity. A strong and pure light is gone out, the radiance of a clear vision and a beneficent purpose. One of those high and most worthy spirits who arise from time to time to stir their generation with new mental impulses in the deeper things, has perished from among us. The death of one who did so much to impress on his contemporaries that physical law works independently of moral law, marks with profounder emphasis the ever ancient and ever fresh decree that there is one end to the just and the unjust, and that the same strait tomb awaits alike the poor dead whom nature or circumstance imprisoned in mean horizons, and those who saw far and felt passionately and put their reason to noble uses. Yet the fulness of our grief is softened by a certain greatness and solemnity in the event. The teachers of men are so few, the gift of intellectual fatherhood is so rare, it is surrounded by such singular

gloriousness. The loss of a powerful and generous statesman, or of a great master in letters or art, touches us with many a vivid regret. The Teacher, the man who has talents and has virtues, and yet has a further something which is neither talent nor virtue, and which gives him the mysterious secret of drawing men after him, leaves a deeper sense of emptiness than this; but lamentation is at once soothed and elevated by a sense of sacredness in the occasion. Even those whom Mr. Mill honoured with his friendship, and who must always bear to his memory the affectionate veneration of sons, may yet feel their pain at the thought that they will see him no more, raised into a higher mood as they meditate on the loftiness of his task and the steadfastness and success with which he achieved it. If it is grievous to think that such richness of culture, such full maturity of wisdom, such passion for truth and justice, are now by a single stroke extinguished, at least we may find some not unworthy solace in the thought of the splendid purpose that they have served in keeping alive, and surrounding with new attractions, the difficult tradition of patient and accurate thinking in union with unselfish and magnanimous living.

Much will one day have to be said as to the precise value of Mr. Mill's philosophical principles, the more or less of his triumphs as a dialectician, his skill as a critic and an expositor. However this trial may go, we shall at any rate be sure that with his reputa-

tion will stand or fall the intellectual repute of a whole generation of his countrymen. The most eminent of those who are now so fast becoming the front line, as death mows down the veterans, all bear traces of his influence, whether they are avowed disciples or avowed opponents. If they did not accept his method of thinking, at least he determined the questions which they should think about. For twenty years no one at all open to serious intellectual impressions has left Oxford without having undergone the influence of Mr. Mill's teaching, though it would be too much to say that in that gray temple where they are ever burnishing new idols, his throne is still unshaken. The professorial chairs there and elsewhere are more and more being filled with men whose minds have been trained in his principles. The universities only typify his influence on the less learned part of the world. The better sort of journalists educated themselves on his books, and even the baser sort acquired a habit of quoting from them. He is the only writer in the world whose treatises on highly abstract subjects have been printed during his lifetime in editions for the people, and sold at the price of railway novels. Foreigners from all countries read his books as attentively as his most eager English disciples, and sought his opinion as to their own questions with as much reverence as if he had been a native oracle. An eminent American who came over on an official mission which brought him into contact with most of the leading statesmen throughout Europe,

said to the present writer :—'The man who impressed me most of them all was Stuart Mill; you placed before him the facts on which you sought his opinion. He took them, gave you the different ways in which they might fairly be looked at, balanced the opposing considerations, and then handed you a final judgment in which nothing was left out. His mind worked like a splendid piece of machinery; you supply it with raw material, and it turns you out a perfectly finished product.' Of such a man England has good reason to be very proud.

He was stamped in many respects with specially English quality. He is the latest chief of a distinctively English school of philosophy, in which, as has been said, the names of Locke, Hume, Adam Smith, and Bentham (and Mr. Mill would have added James Mill) mark the line of succession—the school whose method subordinates imagination to observation, and whose doctrine lays the foundations of knowledge in experience, and the tests of conduct in utility. Yet, for all this, one of his most remarkable characteristics was less English than French; his constant admission of an ideal and imaginative element in social speculation, and a glowing persuasion that the effort and wisdom and ingenuity of men are capable, if free opportunity be given by social arrangements, of raising human destiny to a pitch that is at present beyond our powers of conception. Perhaps the sum of all his distinction lies in this union of stern science with infinite aspiration, of rigorous sense of what is real

and practicable with bright and luminous hope. He told one who was speaking of Condorcet's Life of Turgot, that in his younger days whenever he was inclined to be discouraged, he was in the habit of turning to this book, and that he never did so without recovering possession of himself. To the same friend, who had printed something, comparing Mr. Mill's repulse at Westminster with the dismissal of the great minister of Lewis the Sixteenth, he wrote :—'I never received so gratifying a compliment as the comparison of me to Turgot; it is indeed an honour to me that such an assimilation should have occurred to you.' Those who have studied the character of one whom even the rigid Austin thought worthy to be called 'the godlike Turgot,' know both the nobleness and the rarity of this type.

Its force lies not in single elements, but in that combination of an ardent interest in human improvement with a reasoned attention to the law of its conditions, which alone deserves to be honoured with the high name of wisdom. This completeness was one of the secrets of Mr. Mill's peculiar attraction for young men, and for the comparatively few women whose intellectual interest was strong enough to draw them to his books. He satisfied the ingenuous moral ardour which is instinctive in the best natures, until the dust of daily life dulls or extinguishes it, and at the same time he satisfied the rationalistic qualities, which are not less marked in the youthful temperament of those who by and by do the work of the world. This

mixture of intellectual gravity with a passionate love of improvement in all the aims and instruments of life, made many intelligences alive who would otherwise have slumbered, or sunk either into a dry pedantry on the one hand, or a windy, mischievous philanthropy on the other. He showed himself so wholly free from the vulgarity of the sage. He could hope for the future without taking his eye from the realities of the present. He recognised the social destination of knowledge, and kept the elevation of the great art of social existence ever before him, as the ultimate end of all speculative activity.

Another side of this rare combination was his union of courage with patience, of firm nonconformity with silent conformity. Compliance is always a question of degree, depending on time, circumstance, and subject. Mr. Mill hit the exact mean, equally distant from timorous caution and self-indulgent violence. He was unrivalled in the difficult art of conciliating as much support as was possible and alienating as little sympathy as possible, for novel and extremely unpopular opinions. He was not one of those who strive to spread new faiths by brilliant swordplay with buttoned foils, and he was not one of those who run amuck among the idols of the tribe and the market-place and the theatre. He knew how to kindle the energy of all who were likely to be persuaded by his reasoning, without stimulating in a corresponding degree the energy of persons whose convictions he attacked. Thus he husbanded the

strength of truth, and avoided wasteful friction. Probably no English writer that ever lived has done so much as Mr. Mill to cut at the very root of the theological spirit, yet there is only one passage in the writings published during his lifetime—I mean a well-known passage in the Liberty—which could give any offence to the most devout person. His conformity, one need hardly say, never went beyond the negative degree, nor ever passed beyond the conformity of silence. That guilty and grievously common pusillanimity which leads men to make or act hypocritical professions, always moved his deepest abhorrence. And he did not fear publicly to testify his interest in the return of an atheist to parliament.

His courage was not of the spurious kinds arising from anger, or ignorance of the peril, or levity, or a reckless confidence. These are all very easy. His distinction was that he knew all the danger to himself, was anxious to save pain to others, was buoyed up by no rash hope that the world was to be permanently bettered at a stroke, and yet for all this he knew how to present an undaunted front to a majority. The only fear he ever knew was fear lest a premature or excessive utterance should harm a good cause. He had measured the prejudices of men, and his desire to arouse this obstructive force in the least degree compatible with effective advocacy of any improvement, set the single limit to his intrepidity. Prejudices were to him like physical predispositions, with which you have to make your account. He

knew, too, that they are often bound up with the most valuable elements in character and life, and hence he feared that violent surgery which in eradicating a false opinion fatally bruises at the same time a true and wholesome feeling that may cling to it. The patience which with some men is an instinct, and with others a fair name for indifference, was with him an acquisition of reason and conscience.

The value of this wise and virtuous mixture of boldness with tolerance, of courageous speech with courageous reserve, has been enormous. Along with his direct pleas for freedom of thought and freedom of speech, it has been the chief source of that liberty of expressing unpopular opinions in this country without social persecution, which is now so nearly complete, that he himself was at last astonished by it. The manner of his dialectic, firm and vigorous as the dialectic was in matter, has gradually introduced mitigating elements into the atmosphere of opinion. Partly, no doubt, the singular tolerance of free discussion which now prevails in England—I do not mean that it is at all perfect—arises from the prevalent scepticism, from indifference, and from the influence of some of the more high-minded of the clergy. But Mr. Mill's steadfast abstinence from drawing wholesale indictments against persons or classes whose opinions he controverted, his generous candour, his scrupulous respect for any germ of good in whatever company it was found, and his large allowances, contributed positive elements to what

might otherwise have been the negative tolerance that comes of moral stagnation. Tolerance of distasteful notions in others became associated in his person at once with the widest enlightenment, and the strongest conviction of the truth of our own notions.

His career, beside all else, was a protest of the simplest and loftiest kind against some of the most degrading features of our society. No one is more alive than he was to the worth of all that adds grace and dignity to human life; but the sincerity of this feeling filled him with aversion for the make-believe dignity of a luxurious and artificial community. Without either arrogance or bitterness, he stood aloof from that conventional intercourse which is misnamed social duty. Without either discourtesy or cynicism, he refused to play a part in that dance of mimes which passes for life among the upper classes. In him, to extraordinary intellectual attainments was added the gift of a firm and steadfast self-respect, which unfortunately does not always go with them. He felt the reality of things, and it was easier for a workman than for a princess to obtain access to him. It is not always the men who talk most affectingly about our being all of one flesh and blood, who are proof against those mysterious charms of superior rank, which do so much to foster unworthy conceptions of life in English society; and there are many people capable of accepting Mr. Mill's social

principles, and the theoretical corollaries they contain, who yet would condemn his manly plainness and austere consistency in acting on them. The too common tendency in us all to moral slovenliness, and a lazy contentment with a little flaccid protest against evil, finds a constant rebuke in his career. The indomitable passion for justice which made him strive so long and so tenaciously to bring to judgment a public official, whom he conceived to be a great criminal, was worthy of one of the stoutest patriots in our seventeenth-century history. The same moral thoroughness stirred the same indignation in him on a more recent occasion, when he declared it 'a permanent disgrace to the Government that the iniquitous sentence on the gas-stokers was not remitted as soon as passed.'

Much of his most striking quality was owing to the exceptional degree in which he was alive to the constant tendency of society to lose some excellence of aim, to relapse at some point from the standard of truth and right which had been reached by long previous effort, to fall back in height of moral ideal. He was keenly sensible that it is only by persistent striving after improvement in our conceptions of duty, and improvement in the external means for realising them, that even the acquisitions of past generations are retained. He knew the intense difficulty of making life better by ever so little. Hence at once the exaltation of his own ideas of truth and right,

and his eagerness to conciliate anything like virtuous social feeling, in whatever intellectual or political association he found it. Hence also the vehemence of his passion for the unfettered and unchecked development of new ideas on all subjects, of originality in moral and social points of view; because repression, whether by public opinion or in any other way, may be the means of untold waste of gifts that might have conferred on mankind unspeakable benefits. The discipline and vigour of his understanding made him the least indulgent of judges to anything like charlatanry, and effectually prevented his unwillingness to let the smallest good element be lost, from degenerating into that weak kind of universalism which nullifies some otherwise good men.

Some great men seize upon us by the force of an imposing and majestic authority; their thoughts impress the imagination, their words are winged, they are as prophets bearing high testimony that cannot be gainsaid. Bossuet, for instance, or Pascal. Others, and of these Mr. Mill was one, acquire disciples not by a commanding authority, but by a moderate and impersonal kind of persuasion. He appeals not to our sense of greatness and power in a teacher, which is noble, but to our love of finding and embracing truth for ourselves, which is still nobler. People who like their teacher to be as a king publishing decrees with herald and trumpet, perhaps find Mr. Mill colourless. Yet this habitual effacement of his own

personality marked a delicate and very rare shade in his reverence for the sacred purity of truth.

Meditation on the influence of one who has been the foremost instructor of his time in wisdom and goodness quickly breaks off, in this hour when his loss is fresh upon us; it changes into affectionate reminiscences for which silence is more fitting. In such an hour thought turns rather to the person than the work of the master whom we mourn. We recall his simplicity, gentleness, heroic self-abnegation; his generosity in encouraging, his eager readiness in helping; the warm kindliness of his accost, the friendly brightening of the eye. The last time I saw him was a few days before he left England.[1] He came to spend a day with me in the country, of which the following brief notes happened to be written at the time in a letter to a friend:—

'He came down by the morning train to Guildford station, where I was waiting for him. He was in his most even and mellow humour. We walked in a leisurely way and through roundabout tracks for some four hours along the ancient green road which you know, over the high grassy downs, into old chalk pits picturesque with juniper and yew, across heaths and commons, and so up to our windy promontory, where the majestic prospect stirred him with lively delight. You know he is a fervent botanist, and every ten minutes he stooped to look at this or that on the path. Unluckily I am ignorant of the very rudiments of the matter, so his parenthetic enthusiasms were lost upon me.

[1] April 5, 1873.

'Of course he talked, and talked well. He admitted that Goethe had added new points of view to life, but has a deep dislike of his moral character; wondered how a man who could draw the sorrows of a deserted woman like Aurelia, in *Wilhelm Meister*, should yet have behaved so systematically ill to women. Goethe tried as hard as he could to be a Greek, yet his failure to produce anything perfect in form, except a few lyrics, proves the irresistible expansion of the modern spirit, and the inadequateness of the Greek type to modern needs of activity and expression. Greatly prefers Schiller in all respects; turning to him from Goethe is like going into the fresh air from a hot-house.

'Spoke of style: thinks Goldsmith unsurpassed; then Addison comes. Greatly dislikes the style of Junius and of Gibbon; indeed, thinks meanly of the latter in all respects, except for his research, which alone of the work of that century stands the test of nineteenth-century criticism. Did not agree with me that George Sand's is the high-water mark of prose, but yet could not name anybody higher, and admitted that her prose stirs you like music.

'Seemed disposed to think that the most feasible solution of the Irish University question is a Catholic University, the restrictive and obscurantist tendencies of which you may expect to have checked by the active competition of life with men trained in more enlightened systems. Spoke of Home Rule.

'Made remarks on the difference in the feeling of modern refusers of Christianity as compared with that of men like his father, impassioned deniers, who believed that if only you broke up the power of the priests and checked superstition, all would go well—a dream from which they were partially awakened by seeing that the French revolution, which overthrew the Church, still did not bring the millennium. His radical friends used to be very angry with him for loving Wordsworth. "Words-

worth," I used to say, "is against you, no doubt, in the battle which you are now waging, but after you have won, the world will need more than ever those qualities which Wordsworth is keeping alive and nourishing." In his youth mere negation of religion was a firm bond of union, social and otherwise, between men who agreed in nothing else.

'Spoke of the modern tendency to pure theism, and met the objection that it retards improvement by turning the minds of some of the best men from social affairs, by the counter-proposition that it is useful to society, apart from the question of its truth,—useful as a provisional belief, because people will identify serviceable ministry to men with service of God. Thinks we cannot with any sort of precision define the coming modification of religion, but anticipates that it will undoubtedly rest upon the solidarity of mankind, as Comte said, and as you and I believe. Perceives two things, at any rate, which are likely to lead men to invest this with the moral authority of a religion; first, they will become more and more impressed by the awful fact that a piece of conduct to-day may prove a curse to men and women scores and even hundreds of years after the author of it is dead; and second, they will more and more feel that they can only satisfy their sentiment of gratitude to seen or unseen benefactors, can only repay the untold benefits they have inherited, by diligently maintaining the traditions of service.

'And so forth, full of interest and suggestiveness all through. When he got here, he chatted to R—— over our lunch, with something of the simple amiableness of a child, about the wild flowers, the ways of insects, and notes of birds. He was impatient for the song of the nightingale. Then I drove him to our little roadside station, and one of the most delightful days of my life came to its end, like all other days, delightful and sorrowful.'

Alas, the sorrowful day which ever dogs our delight followed very quickly. The nightingale that he longed for fills the darkness with music, but not for the ear of the dead master: he rests in the deeper darkness where the silence is unbroken for ever. We may console ourselves with the reflection offered by the dying Socrates to his sorrowful companions: he who has arrayed the soul in her own proper jewels of moderation and justice and courage and nobleness and truth, is ever ready for the journey when his time comes. We have lost a great teacher and example of knowledge and virtue, but men will long feel the presence of his character about them, making them ashamed of what is indolent or selfish, and encouraging them to all disinterested labour, both in trying to do good and in trying to find out what the good is,—which is harder.

MR. MILL'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Chercher en gémissant—search with many sighs—that was Pascal's notion of praiseworthy living and choosing the better-part. Search, and search with much travail, strikes us as the chief intellectual ensign and device of that eminent man whose record of his own mental nurture and growth we have all been reading. Everybody endowed with energetic intelligence has a measure of the spirit of search poured out upon him. All such persons act on the Socratic maxim that the life without inquiry is a life to be lived by no man. But it is the rare distinction of a very few to accept the maxim in its full significance, to insist on an open mind as the true secret of wisdom, to press the examination and testing of our convictions as the true way at once to stability and growth of character, and thus to make of life what it is so good for us that it should be, a continual building up, a ceaseless fortifying and enlargement and multiplication of the treasures of the spirit. To make a point of 'examining what was said in defence of all opinions, however new or however old,' in the conviction that even if they were errors there might be a substratum of truth

underneath them, and that in any case the discovery of what it was that made them plausible would be a benefit to truth,'[1]—to thrust out the spirit of party, of sect, of creed, of the poorer sort of self-esteem, of futile contentiousness, and so to seek and again seek with undeviating singleness of mind the right interpretation of our experiences—here is the genuine seal of intellectual mastery and the true stamp of a perfect rationality.

The men to whom this is the ideal of the life of the reason, and who have done anything considerable towards spreading a desire after it, deserve to have their memories gratefully cherished even by those who do not agree with all their positive opinions. We need only to reflect a little on the conditions of human existence; on the urgent demand which material necessities inevitably make on so immense a proportion of our time and thought; on the space which is naturally filled up by the activity of absorbing affections; on the fatal power of mere tradition and report over the indifferent, and the fatal power of inveterate prejudice over so many even of the best of those who are not indifferent. Then we shall know better how to value such a type of character and life as Mr. Mill has now told us the story of, in which intellectual impressionableness on the most important subjects of human thought was so cultivated as almost to acquire the strength and quick responsiveness of emotional sensibility. And this,

[1] Mill's *Autobiography*, 242.

without the too common drawback to great openness of mind. This drawback consists in loose beliefs, taken up to-day and silently dropped to-morrow; vacillating opinions, constantly being exchanged for their contraries; feeble convictions, appearing, shifting, vanishing, in the quicksands of an unstable mind.

Nobody will impute any of these disastrous weaknesses to Mr. Mill. His impressionableness was of the valuable positive kind, which adds and assimilates new elements from many quarters, without disturbing the organic structure of the whole. What he says of one stage in his growth remained generally true of him until the very end:—'I found the fabric of my old and taught opinions giving way in many fresh places, and I never allowed it to fall to pieces, but was incessantly occupied in weaving it anew. I never in the course of my transition was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled. When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I had adjusted its relations to my old opinions, and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to extend in modifying or superseding them' (p. 156). This careful and conscientious recognition of the duty of having ordered opinions, and of responsibility for these opinions being both as true and as consistent with one another as taking pains with his mind could make them, distinguished Mr. Mill from the men who flit aimlessly from doctrine to doctrine, as the flies of a summer day dart from point to point in the vacuous air. It distinguished him also from those

sensitive spirits who fling themselves down from the heights of rationalism suddenly into the pit of an infallible church; and from those who, like La Mennais, move violently between faith and reason, between tradition and inquiry, between the fulness of deference to authority and the fulness of individual self-assertion.

All minds of the first quality move and grow; they have a susceptibility to many sorts of new impressions, a mobility, a feeling outwards, which makes it impossible for them to remain in the stern fixity of an early implanted set of dogmas, whether philosophic or religious. In stoical tenacity of character, as well as in intellectual originality and concentrated force of understanding, some of those who knew both tell us that Mr. Mill was inferior to his father. But who does not feel in the son the serious charm of a power of adaptation and pliableness which we can never associate with the hardy and more rigorous nature of the other? And it was just because he had this sensibility of the intellect, that the history of what it did for him is so edifying a performance for a people like ourselves, among whom that quality is so extremely uncommon. For it was the sensibility of strength and not of weakness, nor of mere over-refinement and subtlety. We may estimate the significance of such a difference, when we think how little, after all, the singular gifts of a Newman or a Maurice have done for their contemporaries, simply because these two eminent men allowed consciousness of their own weakness to

'sickly over' the spontaneous impulses of their strength.

The wonder is that the reaction against such an education as that through which James Mill brought his son,—an education so intense, so purely analytical, doing so much for the reason and so little for the satisfaction of the affections,—was not of the most violent kind. The wonder is that the crisis through which nearly every youth of good quality has to pass, and from which Mr. Mill, as he has told us, by no means escaped, did not land him in some of the extreme forms of transcendentalism. If it had done so the record of the journey would no doubt have been more abundant in melodramatic incidents. It would have done more to tickle the fancy of 'the present age of loud disputes but weak convictions.' And it might have been found more touching by the large numbers of talkers and writers who seem to think that a history of a careful man's opinions on grave and difficult subjects ought to have all the rapid movements and unexpected turns of a romance, and that a book without rapture and effusion and a great many capital letters must be joyless and disappointing. Those of us who dislike literary hysteria as much as we dislike the coarseness that mistakes itself for force, may well be glad to follow the mental history of a man who knew how to move and grow without any of these reactions and leaps on the one hand, or any of that overdone realism on the other, which may all make a more striking picture, but

which do assuredly more often than not mark the ruin of a mind and the nullification of a career.

If we are now and then conscious in the book of a certain want of spacing, of changing perspectives and long vistas; if we have perhaps a sense of being too narrowly enclosed; if we miss the relish of humour or the occasional relief of irony; we ought to remember that we are busy not with a work of imagination or art, but with the practical record of the formation of an eminent thinker's mental habits and the succession of his mental attitudes. The formation of such mental habits is not a romance, but the most arduous of real concerns. If we are led up to none of the enkindled summits of the soul, and plunged into none of its abysses, that is no reason why we should fail to be struck by the pale flame of strenuous self-possession, or touched by the ingenuousness and simplicity of the speaker's accents. A generation continually excited by narratives, as sterile as vehement, of storm and stress and spiritual shipwreck, might do well, if it knew the things that pertained to its peace, to ponder this unvarnished history—the history of a man who, though he was not one of the picturesque victims of the wasteful torments of an uneasy spiritual self-consciousness, yet laboured so patiently after the gifts of intellectual strength, and did so much permanently to widen the judgments of the world.

If Mr. Mill's Autobiography has no literary grandeur, nor artistic variety, it has the rarer merit of

presenting for our contemplation a character that was infested by none of the smaller passions, and warped by none of the more unintelligent attitudes of the human mind. We have to remember that it is exactly these, the smaller passions on the one hand, and slovenliness of intelligence on the other, which are even worse agencies in spoiling the worth of life and the advance of society than the more imposing vices either of thought or sentiment. Many have told the tale of a life of much external eventfulness. There is a rarer instructiveness in the quiet career of one whose life was an incessant education, a persistent strengthening of the mental habit of 'never accepting half-solutions of difficulties as complete; never abandoning a puzzle, but again and again returning to it until it was cleared up; never allowing obscure corners of a subject to remain unexplored, because they did not appear important; never thinking that I perfectly understood any part of a subject until I understood the whole' (p. 123). It is true that this mental habit is not so singular in itself, for it is the common and indispensable merit of every truly scientific thinker. Mr. Mill's distinction lay in the deliberate intention and the systematic patience with which he brought it to the consideration of moral and religious and social subjects. In this region hitherto, for reasons that are not difficult to seek, the empire of prejudice and passion has been so much stronger, so much harder to resist, than in the field of physical science.

Sect is so ready to succeed sect, and school comes after school, with constant replacement of one sort of orthodoxy by another sort, until even the principle of relativity becomes the base of a set of absolute and final dogmas, and the very doctrine of uncertainty itself becomes fixed in a kind of authoritative nihilism. It is, therefore, a signal gain that we now have a new type, with the old wise device, *μέμνησο ἀπιστεῖν—be sure that you distrust.* Distrust your own bias; distrust your supposed knowledge; constantly try, prove, fortify your firmest convictions. And all this, throughout the whole domain where the intelligence rules. It was characteristic of a man of this type that he should have been seized by that memorable passage in Condorcet's Life of Turgot to which Mr. Mill refers (p. 114), and which every man with an active interest in serious affairs should bind about his neck and write on the tablets of his heart.

'Turgot,' says his wise biographer, 'always looked upon anything like a sect as mischievous. . . . From the moment that a sect comes into existence, all the individuals composing it become answerable for the faults and errors of each one of them. The obligation to remain united leads them to suppress or dissemble all truths that might wound anybody whose adhesion is useful to the sect. They are forced to establish in some form a body of doctrine, and the opinions which make a part of it, being adopted without inquiry, become in due time pure prejudices. Friendship stops with the individuals; but the hatred

and envy that any of them may arouse extends to the whole sect. If this sect be formed by the most enlightened men of the nation, if the defence of truths of the greatest importance to the common happiness be the object of its zeal, the mischief is still worse. Everything true or useful which they propose is rejected without examination. Abuses and errors of every kind always have for their defenders that herd of presumptuous and mediocre mortals, who are the bitterest enemies of all celebrity and renown. Scarcely is a truth made clear, before those to whom it would be prejudicial crush it under the name of a sect that is sure to have already become odious, and are certain to keep it from obtaining so much as a hearing. Turgot, then, was persuaded that perhaps the greatest ill you can do to truth is to drive those who love it to form themselves into a sect, and that these in turn can commit no more fatal mistake than to have the vanity or the weakness to fall into the trap.'

Yet we know that with Mr. Mill as with Turgot this deep distrust of sect was no hindrance to the most careful systematisation of opinion and conduct. He did not interpret many-sidedness in the flaccid watery sense which flatters the indolence of so many of our contemporaries, who like to have their ears amused with a new doctrine each morning, to be held for a day, and dropped in the evening, and who have little more seriousness in their intellectual life than the busy insects of a summer noon. He says that

he looked forward 'to a future which shall unite the best qualities of the critical with the best qualities of the organic periods; unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful to others; but also convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and the true exigencies of life, that they shall not, like all former and present creeds, religious, ethical, and political, require to be periodically thrown off and replaced by others' (p. 166). This was in some sort the type at which he aimed in the formation of his own character—a type that should combine organic with critical quality, the strength of an ordered set of convictions, with that pliability and that receptiveness in face of new truth, which are indispensable to these very convictions being held intelligently and in their best attainable form. We can understand the force of the eulogy on John Austin (p. 154), that he manifested 'an equal devotion to the two cardinal points of Liberty and Duty.' These are the correlatives in the sphere of action to the two cardinal points of Criticism and Belief in the sphere of thought.

We can in the light of this double way of viewing the right balance of the mind, the better understand the combination of earnestness with tolerance which inconsiderate persons are apt to find so awkward a stumbling-block in the scheme of philosophic liberal-

ism. Many people in our time have so ill understood the doctrine of liberty, that in some of the most active circles in society they now count you a bigot if you hold any proposition to be decidedly and unmistakably more true than any other. They pronounce you intemperate if you show anger and stern disappointment because men follow the wrong course instead of the right one. Mr. Mill's explanation of the vehemence and decision of his father's disapproval, when he did disapprove, and his refusal to allow honesty of purpose in the doer to soften his disapprobation of the deed, gives the reader a worthy and masculine notion of true tolerance. James Mill's 'aversion to many intellectual errors, or what he regarded as such, partook in a certain sense of the character of a moral feeling. . . . None but those who do not care about opinions will confound this with intolerance. Those, who having opinions which they hold to be immensely important, and their contraries to be prodigiously hurtful, have any deep regard for the general good, will necessarily dislike, as a class and in the abstract, those who think wrong what they think right, and right what they think wrong: though they need not be, nor was my father, insensible to good qualities in an opponent, nor governed in their estimation of individuals by one general presumption, instead of by the whole of their character. I grant that an earnest person, being no more infallible than other men, is liable to dislike people on account of opinions which do not merit

dislike; but if he neither himself does them any ill office, nor connives at its being done by others, he is not intolerant: and the forbearance which flows from a conscientious sense of the importance to mankind of the equal freedom of all opinions is the only tolerance which is commendable, or to the highest moral order of minds, possible' (p. 51). This is another side of the co-ordination of Criticism and Belief, of Liberty and Duty, which attained in Mr. Mill himself a completeness that other men, less favoured in education and with less active power of self-control, are not likely to reach, but to reach it ought to be one of the prime objects of their mental discipline. The inculcation of this peculiar morality of the intelligence is one of the most urgently needed processes of our time. For the circumstance of our being in the very depths of a period of transition from one spiritual basis of thought to another, leads men not only to be content with holding a quantity of vague, confused, and contradictory opinions, but also to invest with the honourable name of candour a weak reluctance to hold any one of them earnestly.

Mr. Mill experienced in the four or five last years of his life the disadvantage of trying to unite fairness towards the opinions from which he differed, with loyalty to the positive opinions which he accepted. 'As I had showed in my political writings,' he says, 'that I was aware of the weak points in democratic opinions, some Conservatives, it seems, had not been without hopes of finding me an opponent of demo-

cracy: as I was able to see the Conservative side of the question, they presumed that like them I could not see any other side. Yet if they had really read my writings, they would have known that after giving full weight to all that appeared to me well grounded in the arguments against democracy, I unhesitatingly decided in its favour, while recommending that it should be accompanied by such institutions as were consistent with its principle and calculated to ward off its inconveniences' (p. 309). This was only one illustration of what constantly happened, until at length, it is hardly too much to say, a man who had hitherto enjoyed a singular measure of general reverence because he was supposed to see truth in every doctrine, became downright unpopular among many classes in the community, because he saw more truth in one doctrine than another, and brought the propositions for whose acceptance he was most in earnest eagerly before the public.

In a similar way the Autobiography shows us the picture of a man uniting profound self-respect with a singular neutrality where his own claims are concerned, a singular self-mastery and justice of mind, in matters where with most men the sense of their own personality is wont to be so exacting and so easily irritated. The history of intellectual eminence is too often a history of immoderate egoism. It has perhaps hardly ever been given to any one who exerted such influence as Mr. Mill did over his contemporaries, to view his own share in it with such discrimination and equity

as marks every page of his book, and as used to mark every word of his conversation. Knowing as we all do the last infirmity of even noble minds, and how deep the desire to erect himself Pope and Sir Oracle lies in the spirit of a man with strong convictions, we may value the more highly, as well for its rarity as for its intrinsic worth, Mr. Mill's quality of self-effacement, and his steadfast care to look anywhere rather than in his own personal merits, for the source of any of those excellences which he was never led by false modesty to dissemble.

Many people seem to find the most interesting figure in the book that stoical father, whose austere, energetic, imperious, and relentless character showed the temperament of the Scotch Covenanter of the seventeenth century, inspired by the principles and philosophy of France in the eighteenth. No doubt, for those in search of strong dramatic effects, the lines of this strenuous indomitable nature are full of impressiveness.[1] But one ought to be able to appreciate

[1] In an interesting volume (*The Minor Works of George Grote*, edited by Alexander Bain. London: Murray), we find Grote confirming Mr. Mill's estimate of his father's psychagogic quality. 'His unpremeditated oral exposition,' says Grote of James Mill, 'was hardly less effective than his prepared work with the pen; his colloquial fertility in philosophical subjects, his power of discussing himself, and stimulating others to discuss, his ready responsive inspirations through all the shifts and windings of a sort of Platonic dialogue,—all these accomplishments were to those who knew him, even more impressive than what he composed for the press. Conversation with him was not merely instructive, but provocative to the observant intelligence. Of

the distinction and strength of the father, and yet also be able to see that the distinction of the son's strength was in truth more really impressive still. We encounter a modesty that almost speaks the language of fatalism. Pieces of good fortune that most people would assuredly have either explained as due to their own penetration, or to the recognition of their worth by others, or else would have refrained from dwelling upon, as being no more than events of secondary importance, are by Mr. Mill invariably recognised at their full worth or even above it, and invariably spoken of as fortunate accidents, happy turns in the lottery of life, or in some other quiet fatalistic phrase, expressive of his deep feeling how much we owe to influences over which we have no control and for which we have no right to take any credit. His saying that 'it would be a blessing if the doctrine of necessity could be believed by all *quoad* the characters of others, and disbelieved in regard to their own' (p. 169), went even further than that, for he teaches us to accept the doctrine of necessity *quoad* the most marked felicities of life and character, and

all persons whom we have known, Mr. James Mill was the one who stood least remote from the lofty Platonic ideal of Dialectic —τοῦ διδόναι καὶ δέχεσθαι λόγον (the giving and receiving of reasons)—competent alike to examine others or to be examined by them in philosophy. When to this we add a strenuous character, earnest convictions, and single-minded devotion to truth, with an utter disdain of mere paradox, it may be conceived that such a man exercised powerful intellectual ascendancy over youthful minds,' etc.—*Minor Works of George Grote*, p. 284.

to lean lightly or not at all upon it in regard to our demerits. Humility is a rationalistic, no less than a Christian grace—not humility in face of error or arrogant pretensions or selfishness, nor a humility that paralyses energetic effort, but a steadfast consciousness of all the good gifts which our forerunners have made ready for us, and of the weight of our responsibility for transmitting these helpful forces to a new generation, not diminished but augmented.

In more than one remarkable place the Autobiography shows us distinctly what all careful students of Mr. Mill's books supposed, that with him the social aim, the repayment of the services of the past by devotion to the services of present and future, was predominant over any merely speculative curiosity or abstract interest. His preference for deeply reserved ways of expressing even his strongest feelings prevented him from making any expansive show of this governing sentiment. Though no man was ever more free from any taint of that bad habit of us English, of denying or palliating an abuse or a wrong, unless we are prepared with an instant remedy for it, yet he had a strong aversion to mere socialistic declamation. Perhaps, if one may say so without presumption, he was not indulgent enough in this respect. I remember once pressing him with some enthusiasm for Victor Hugo,—an enthusiasm, one is glad to think, which time does nothing to weaken. Mr. Mill, admitting, though not too lavishly, the superb imaginative power

of this poetic master of our time, still counted it a fatal drawback to Hugo's worth and claim to recognition that 'he has not brought forward one single practical proposal for the improvement of the society against which he is incessantly thundering.' I ventured to urge that it is unreasonable to ask a poet to draft acts of parliament; and that by bringing all the strength of his imagination and all the majestic fulness of his sympathy to bear on the social horrors and injustices which still lie so thick about us, he kindled an inextinguishable fire in the hearts of men of weaker initiative and less imperial gifts alike of imagination and sympathy, and so prepared the forces out of which practical proposals and specific improvements may be expected to issue. That so obvious a kind of reflection should not have previously interested Mr. Mill's judgment in favour of the writer of the *Outcasts*, the *Legend of the Ages*, the *Contemplations*, only shows how strong was his dislike to all that savoured of the grandiose, and how afraid he always was of everything that seemed to dissociate emotion from rationally directed effort. That he was himself inspired by this emotion of pity for the common people, of divine rage against the injustice of the strong to the weak, in a degree not inferior to Victor Hugo himself, his whole career most effectually demonstrates.

It is this devotion to the substantial good of the many, though practised without the noisy or ostentatious professions of more egoistic thinkers, which binds together all the parts of his work, from the *System of*

Logic down to his last speech on the Land Question. One of the most striking pages in the Autobiography is that in which he gives his reasons for composing the refutation of Hamilton, and as some of these especially valuable passages in the book seem to be running the risk of neglect in favour of those which happen to furnish material for the idle, pitiful gossip of London society, it may be well to reproduce it.

'The difference,' he says, 'between these two schools of philosophy, that of Intuition and that of Experience and Association, is not a mere matter of abstract speculation; it is full of practical consequences, and lies at the foundation of all the greatest differences of practical opinion in an age of progress. The practical reformer has continually to demand that changes be made in things which are supported by powerful and widely spread feelings, or to question the apparent necessity and indefeasibleness of established facts; and it is often an indispensable part of his argument to show how those powerful feelings had their origin, and how those facts came to seem necessary and indefeasible. There is therefore a natural hostility between him and a philosophy which discourages the explanation of feelings and moral facts by circumstances and association, and prefers to treat them as ultimate elements of human nature; a philosophy which is addicted to holding up favourite doctrines as intuitive truths, and deems intuition to be the voice of Nature and of God, speaking with an authority higher than that of our reason. In particular, I have long felt

that the prevailing tendency to regard all the marked distinctions of human character as innate, and in the main indelible, and to ignore the irresistible proofs that by far the greater part of those differences, whether between individuals, races, or sexes, are such as not only might but naturally would be produced by differences in circumstances, is one of the chief hindrances to the rational treatment of great social questions, and one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to human improvement. This tendency has its source in the intuitional metaphysics which characterised the reaction of the nineteenth century against the eighteenth, and it is a tendency so agreeable to human indolence, as well as to conservative interests generally, that unless attacked at the very root, it is sure to be carried to even a greater length than is really justified by the more moderate forms of the intuitional philosophy. . . . Considering then the writings and fame of Sir W. Hamilton as the great fortress of the intuitional philosophy in this country, a fortress the more formidable from the imposing character, and the, in many respects, great personal merits and mental endowments of the man, I thought it might be a real service to philosophy to attempt a thorough examination of all his most important doctrines, and an estimate of his general claims to eminence as a philosopher; and I was confirmed in this resolution by observing that in the writings of at least one, and him one of the ablest, of Sir W. Hamilton's followers, his peculiar doctrines were made the justification of a

view of religion which I hold to be profoundly immoral —that it is our duty to bow down and worship before a Being whose moral attributes are affirmed to be unknowable by us, and to be perhaps extremely different from those which, when speaking of our fellow-creatures, we call by the same name' (pp. 273-275).

Thus we see that even where the distance between the object of his inquiry and the practical wellbeing of mankind seemed farthest, still the latter was his starting point, and the doing 'a real service to philosophy' only occurred to him in connection with a still greater and more real service to those social causes for which, and which only, philosophy is worth cultivating. In the *System of Logic* the inspiration had been the same.

'The notion that truths external to the mind,' he writes, 'may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory every inveterate belief and every intense feeling of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was an instrument better devised for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices. And the chief strength of this false philosophy in morals, politics, and religion, lies in the appeal which it is accustomed to make to

the evidence of mathematics and of the cognate branches of physical science. To expel it from these is to drive it from its stronghold. . . . In attempting to clear up the real nature of the evidence of mathematical and physical truth, the *System of Logic* met the intuitive philosophers on ground on which they had previously been deemed unassailable; and gave its own explanation from experience and association of that peculiar character of what are called necessary truths, which is adduced as proof that their evidence must come from a deeper source than experience. Whether this has been done effectually is still *sub judice;* and even then, to deprive a mode of thought so strongly rooted in human prejudices and partialities of its mere speculative support, goes but a very little way towards overcoming it; but though only a step, it is a quite indispensable one; for since, after all, prejudice can only be successfully combated by philosophy, no way can really be made against it permanently, until it has been shown not to have philosophy on its side' (pp. 225-227).

This was to lay the basis of a true positivism by the only means through which it can be laid firmly. It was to establish at the bottom of men's minds the habit of seeking explanations of all phenomena in experience, and building up from the beginning the great positive principle that we can only know phenomena, and can only know them experientially. We see, from such passages as the two that have been quoted, that with Mr. Mill, no less than with

Comte, the ultimate object was to bring people to extend positive modes of thinking to the master subjects of morals, politics, and religion. Mr. Mill, however, with a wisdom which Comte unfortunately did not share, refrained from any rash and premature attempt to decide what would be the results of this much-needed extension. He knew that we were as yet only just coming in sight of the stage where these most complex of all phenomena can be fruitfully studied on positive methods, and he was content with doing as much as he could to expel other methods from men's minds, and to engender the positive spirit and temper. Comte, on the other hand, presumed at once to draw up a minute plan of social reconstruction, which contains some ideas of great beauty and power, some of extreme absurdity, and some which would be very mischievous if there were the smallest chance of their ever being realised. 'His book stands,' Mr. Mill truly says of the *System of Positive Polity*, 'a monumental warning to thinkers on society and politics of what happens when once men lose sight in their speculations of the value of Liberty and Individuality' (p. 213).

It was his own sense of the value of Liberty which led to the production of the little tractate which Mr. Mill himself thought likely to survive longer than anything else that he had written, 'with the possible exception of the *Logic*,' as being 'a kind of philosophic text-book of a single truth, which the changes pro-

gressively taking place in modern society tend to bring out into ever stronger relief; the importance to man and society, of a large variety in types of character, and of giving full freedom to human nature to expand itself in innumerable and conflicting directions' (p. 253). It seems to us, however, that Mr. Mill's plea for Liberty in the abstract, invaluable as it is, still is less important than the memorable application of this plea, and of all the arguments supporting it, to that half of the human race whose individuality has hitherto been blindly and most wastefully repressed. The little book on the *Subjection of Women*, though not a capital performance like the *Logic*, was the capital illustration of the modes of reasoning about human character set forth in his *Logic* applied to the case in which the old metaphysical notion of innate and indelible differences is still nearly as strong as ever it was, and in which its moral and social consequences are so inexpressibly disastrous, so superlatively powerful in keeping the ordinary level of the aims and achievements of life low and meagre. The accurate and unanswerable reasoning no less than the noble elevation of this great argument; the sagacity of a hundred of its maxims on individual conduct and character, no less than the combined rationality and beauty of its aspirations for the improvement of collective social life, make this piece probably the best illustration of all the best and richest qualities of its author's mind, and it is fortunate that a subject of such incomparable importance should

have been first effectively presented for discussion in so worthy and pregnant a form.

It is interesting to know definitely from the Autobiography, what is implied in the opening of the book itself, that a zealous belief in the advantages of abolishing the legal and social inequalities of women was not due to the accident of personal intimacy with one or two more women of exceptional distinction of character. What has been ignorantly supposed in our own day to be a crotchet of Mr. Mill's was the common doctrine of the younger proselytes of the Benthamite school, and Bentham himself was wholly with them (*Autobiography*, p. 105, and also 244); as, of course, were other thinkers of an earlier date, Condorcet for instance.[1] In this as in other subjects Mr. Mill did not go beyond his modest definition of his own originality—the application of old ideas in new forms and connections (p. 119), or the originality 'which every thoughtful mind gives to its own mode of conceiving and expressing truths which are common property' (p. 254). Or shall we say that he had an originality of a more genuine kind, which made him first diligently acquire what in an excellent phrase he calls *plenary possession* of truths, and then transfuse them with a sympathetic and contagious enthusiasm?

It is often complained that the Book on Women has the radical imperfection of not speaking plainly

[1] Condorcet's arguments the reader will find in vol. i. of the present series of these *Critical Miscellanies*, p. 249.

on the question of the limitations proper to divorce. The present writer once ventured to ask Mr. Mill why he had left this important point undiscussed. Mr. Mill replied that it seemed to him impossible to settle the expediency of more liberal conditions of divorce, 'first, without hearing much more fully than we could possibly do at present the ideas held by women in the matter; second, until the experiment of marriage with entire equality between man and wife had been properly tried.' People who are in a hurry to get rid of their partners may find this very halting kind of work, and a man who wants to take a new wife before sunset, may well be irritated by a philosopher who tells him that the question may possibly be capable of useful discussion towards the middle of the next century. But Mr. Mill's argument is full of force and praiseworthy patience.

The union of boundless patience with unshaken hope was one of Mr. Mill's most conspicuous distinctions. There are two crises in the history of grave and sensitive natures. One on the threshold of manhood, when the youth defines his purpose, his creed, his aspirations; the other towards the later part of middle life, when circumstance has strained his purpose, and tested his creed, and given to his aspirations a cold and practical measure. The second crisis, though less stirring, less vivid, less coloured to the imagination, is the weightier probation of the two, for it is final and decisive; it marks not the mere

unresisted force of youthful impulse and implanted predispositions, as the earlier crisis does, but rather the resisting quality, the strength, the purity, the depth, of the native character, after the many princes of the power of the air have had time and chance of fighting their hardest against it. It is the turn which a man takes about the age of forty or five-and-forty that parts him off among the sheep on the right hand or the poor goats on the left. This is the time of the grand moral climacteric; when genial unvarnished selfishness, or coarse and ungenial cynicism, or querulous despondency, finally chokes out the generous resolve of a fancied strength which had not yet been tried in the burning fiery furnace of circumstance.

Mr. Mill did not escape the second crisis, any more than he had escaped the first, though he dismisses it in a far more summary manner. The education, he tells us, which his father had given him with such fine solicitude, had taught him to look for the greatest and surest source of happiness in sympathy with the good of mankind on a large scale, and had fitted him to work for this good of mankind in various ways. By the time he was twenty, his sympathies and passive susceptibilities had been so little cultivated, his analytic quality had been developed with so little balance in the shape of developed feelings, that he suddenly found himself unable to take pleasure in those thoughts of virtue and benevolence which had hitherto only been associated with logical demonstration and not with sympathetic sentiment. This

dejection was dispelled mainly by the influence of Wordsworth—a poet austere yet gracious, energetic yet sober, penetrated with feeling for nature, yet penetrated with feeling for the homely lot of man. Here was the emotional synthesis, binding together the energies of the speculative and active mind by sympathetic interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings.

For some ten years more (1826-1836) Mr. Mill hoped the greatest things for the good of society from reformed institutions. That was the period of parliamentary changes, and such hope was natural and universal. Then a shadow came over this confidence, and Mr. Mill advanced to the position that the choice of political institutions is subordinate to the question, 'what great improvement in life and culture stands next in order for the people concerned, as the condition of their further progress?' (p. 170). In this period he composed the *Logic* (published 1843) and the *Political Economy* (1848). Then he saw what all ardent lovers of improvement are condemned to see, that their hopes have outstripped the rate of progress; that fulfilment of social aspiration is tardy and very slow of foot; and that the leaders of human thought are never permitted to enter into that Promised Land whither they are conducting others. Changes for which he had worked and from which he expected most, came to pass, but, after they had come to pass, they were 'attended with much less benefit to human wellbeing than I should formerly have anticipated,

because they had produced very little improvement in that which all real amelioration in the lot of mankind depends on, their intellectual and moral state. . . . I had learnt from experience that many false opinions may be exchanged for true ones, without in the least altering the habit of mind of which false opinions are the result' (p. 239). This discovery appears to have brought on no recurrence of the dejection which had clouded a portion of his youth. It only set him to consider the root of so disappointing a conclusion, and led to the conviction that a great change in the fundamental constitution of men's modes of thought must precede any marked improvement in their lot. He perceived that society is now passing through a transitional period 'of weak convictions, paralysed intellects, and growing laxity of principle,' the consequence of the discredit in the more reflective minds of the old opinions on the cardinal subjects of religion, morals, and politics, which have now lost most of their efficacy for good, though still possessed of life enough to present formidable obstacles to the growth of better opinion on those subjects (p. 239).

Thus the crisis of disappointment which breaks up the hope and effort of so many men who start well, or else throws them into poor and sterile courses, proved in this grave, fervent, and most reasonable spirit only the beginning of more serious endeavours in a new and more arduous vein. Hitherto he had been, as he says, 'more willing to be content with seconding the superficial improvements which had

begun to take place in the common opinions of society and the world.' Henceforth he kept less and less in abeyance the more heretical part of his opinions, which he began more and more clearly to discern as 'almost the only ones, the assertion of which tends in any way to regenerate society' (p. 230). The crisis of middle age developed a new fortitude, a more earnest intrepidity, a greater boldness of expression about the deeper things, an interest profounder than ever in the improvement of the human lot. The book on the *Subjection of Women*, the *Liberty*, and probably some pieces that have not yet been given to the world, are the notable result of this ripest, loftiest, and most inspiring part of his life.

This judgment does not appear to be shared by the majority of those who have hitherto published their opinions upon Mr. Mill's life and works. Perhaps it would have been odd if such a judgment had been common. People who think seriously of life and its conditions either are content with those conditions as they exist, or else they find them empty and deeply unsatisfying. Well, the former class, who naturally figure prominently in the public press, because the press is the more or less flattering mirror of the prevailing doctrines of the day, think that Mr. Mill's views of a better social future are chimerical, utopian, and sentimental. The latter class compensate themselves for the pinchedness of the real world about them by certain rapturous ideals, centring in

God, a future life, and the long companionship of the blessed. The consequence of this absorption either in the immediate interests and aims of the hour, or in the interests and aims of an imaginary world which is supposed to await us after death, has been a hasty inclination to look on such a life and such purposes as are set forth in the Autobiography as essentially jejune and dreary. It is not in the least surprising that such a feeling should prevail. If it were otherwise, if the majority of thoughtful men and women were already in a condition to be penetrated by sympathy for the life of 'search with many sighs,' then we should have already gone far on our way towards the goal which a Turgot or a Mill set for human progress. If society had at once recognised the full attractiveness of a life arduously passed in consideration of the means by which the race may take its next step forward in the improvement of character and the amelioration of the common lot,—and this not from love of God nor hope of recompense in a world to come, and still less from hope of recompense or even any very firm assurance of fulfilled aspiration in this world,—then that fundamental renovation of conviction for which Mr. Mill sighed, and that evolution of a new faith to which he had looked forward in the far distance, would already have come to pass.

Mr. Mill has been ungenerously ridiculed for the eagerness and enthusiasm of his contemplation of a new and better state of human society. Yet we have

always been taught to consider it the mark of the loftiest and most spiritual character, for one to be capable of rapturous contemplation of a new and better state in a future life. Why, then, do you not recognise the loftiness and spirituality of those who make their heaven in the thought of the wider light and purer happiness that, in the immensity of the ages, may be brought to new generations of men, by long force of vision and endeavour? What great element is wanting in a life guided by such a hope? Is it not disinterested, and magnanimous, and purifying, and elevating? The countless beauties of association which cluster round the older faith may make the new seem bleak and chilly. But when what is now the old faith was itself new, that too may well have struck, as we know that it did strike, the adherent of the mellowed pagan philosophy as crude, meagre, jejune, dreary.

Then Mr. Mill's life as disclosed to us in these pages has been called joyless, by that sect of religious partisans whose peculiarity is to mistake boisterousness for unction. Was the life of Christ himself, then, so particularly joyful? Can the life of any man be joyful who sees and feels the tragic miseries and hardly less tragic follies of the earth? The old Preacher, when he considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and beheld the tears of such as were oppressed and had no comforter, therefore praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive, and declared him better than both,

which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. Those who are willing to trick their understandings and play fast and loose with words may, if they please, console themselves with the fatuous commonplaces of a philosophic optimism. They may, with eyes tight shut, cling to the notion that they live in the best of all possible worlds, or discerning all the anguish that may be compressed into threescore years and ten, still try to accept the Stoic's paradox that pain is not an evil. Or, most wonderful and most common of all, they may find this joy of which they talk, in meditating on the moral perfections of the omnipotent Being for whose diversion the dismal panorama of all the evil work done under the sun was bidden to unfold itself, and who sees that it is very good. Those who are capable of a continuity of joyous emotion on these terms may well complain of Mr. Mill's story as dreary; and so may the school of Solomon, who commended mirth because a man hath no better thing than to eat and to drink and to be merry. People, however, who are prohibited by their intellectual conditions from finding full satisfaction either in spiritual raptures or in pleasures of sense, may think the standard of happiness which Mr. Mill sought and reached, not unacceptable and not unworthy of being diligently striven after.

Mr. Mill's conception of happiness in life is more intelligible if we contrast it with his father's. The Cynic element in James Mill, as his son now tells us

(p. 48), was that he had scarcely any belief in pleasures; he thought few of them worth the price which has to be paid for them; and he set down the greater number of the miscarriages in life as due to an excessive estimate of them. 'He thought human life a poor thing at best, after the freshness of youth and of unsatisfied curiosity had gone by. . . . He would sometimes say that if life were made what it might be, by good government and good education, it would be worth having; but he never spoke with anything like enthusiasm even of that possibility.' We should shrink from calling even this theory dreary, associated as it is with the rigorous enforcement of the heroic virtues of temperance and moderation, and the strenuous and careful bracing up of every faculty to face the inevitable and make the best of it. At bottom it is the theory of many of the bravest souls, who fare grimly through life in the mood of leaders of forlorn hopes, denying pleasures, yet very sensible of the stern delight of fortitude. We can have no difficulty in understanding that, when the elder Mill lay dying, 'his interest in all things and persons that had interested him through life was undiminished, nor did the approach of death cause the smallest wavering (as in so strong and firm a mind it was impossible that it should), in his convictions on the subject of religion. His principal satisfaction, after he knew that his end was near, seemed to be the thought of what he had done to make the world better than he found it; and his chief regret

in not living longer, that he had not had time to do more' (p. 203).[1]

Mr. Mill, however, went beyond this conception. He had a belief in pleasures, and thought human life by no means a poor thing to those who know how to make the best of it. It was essential both to the stability of his utilitarian philosophy, and to the contentment of his own temperament, that the reality of happiness should be vindicated, and he did both vindicate and attain it. A highly pleasurable excitement that should have no end, of course he did not think possible; but he regarded the two constituents of a satisfied life, much tranquillity and some excitement, as perfectly attainable by many men, and as ultimately attainable by very many more. The ingredients of this satisfaction he set forth as follows:—a willingness not to expect more from life than life is capable of bestowing; an intelligent interest in the objects of mental culture; genuine private affections; and a sincere interest in the public good. What, on the other hand, are the hindrances which prevent these elements from being in the possession of every one born in a civilised country? Ignorance; bad laws or customs, debarring a man or woman from the sources of happiness within reach; and 'the positive evils of life, the great sources of physical and mental suffering—such as indigence,

[1] For the mood in which death was faced by another person who had renounced theology and the doctrine of a future state of consciousness, see Miss Martineau's *Autobiography*, ii. 435, etc.

disease, and the unkindness, worthlessness, or premature loss of objects of affection.'[1] But every one of these calamitous impediments is susceptible of the weightiest modification, and some of them of final removal. Mr. Mill had learnt from Turgot and Condorcet—two of the wisest and noblest of men, as he justly calls them (113)—among many other lessons, this of the boundless improvableness of the human lot, and we may believe that he read over many a time the pages in which Condorcet delineated the Tenth Epoch in the history of human perfectibility, and traced out in words of finely reserved enthusiasm the operation of the forces which should consummate the progress of the race. 'All the grand sources of human suffering,' Mr. Mill thought, 'are in a great degree, many of them almost entirely, conquerable by human care and effort; and though their removal is grievously slow—though a long succession of generations will perish in the breach before the conquest is completed, and this world becomes all that, if will and knowledge were not wanting, it might easily be made—yet every mind sufficiently intelligent and generous to bear a part, however small and unconspicuous, in the endeavour, will draw a noble enjoyment from the contest itself, which he would not for any bribe in the form of selfish indulgence consent to be without' (*Utilitarianism*, 22).

We thus see how far from dreary this wise and benign man actually found his own life; how full it

[1] For this exposition see *Utilitarianism*, pp. 18-24.

was of cheerfulness, of animation, of persevering search, of a tranquillity lighted up at wholesome intervals by flashes of intellectual and moral excitement. That it was not seldom crossed by moods of despondency is likely enough, but we may at least be sure that these moods had nothing in common with the vulgar despondency of those whose hopes are centred in material prosperity in this world and spiritual prosperity in some other. They were, at least, the dejection of a magnanimous spirit, that could only be cast down by some new hindrance to the spread of reason and enlightenment among men, or some new weakening of their incentives to right doing.

Much has been said against Mr. Mill's strictures on society, and his withdrawal from it. If we realise the full force of all that he says of his own purpose in life, it is hard to see how either his opinion or his practice could have been different. He ceased to be content with 'seconding the superficial improvements' in common ways of thinking, and saw the necessity of working at a fundamental reconstitution of accepted modes of thought. This in itself implies a condemnation of a social intercourse that rests on the base of conventional ways of looking at things. The better kind of society, it is true, appears to contain two classes; not only the class that will hear nothing said hostile to the greater social conventions, including among these the popular theology, but also another

class who will tolerate or even encourage attack on the greater social conventions, and a certain mild discussion of improvements in them—provided only neither attack nor discussion be conducted in too serious a vein. A new idea about God, or property, or the family, is handed round among the company, as ladies of quality in Queen Anne's time handed round a black page or a China monster. In Bishop Butler's phrase, these people only want to know what is said, not what is true. To be in earnest, to show that you mean what you say, to think of drawing blood in the encounter, is thought, and perhaps very naturally thought, to be a piece of bad manners. Social intercourse can only exist either pleasantly or profitably among people who share a great deal of common ground in opinion and feeling. Mr. Mill, no doubt, was always anxious to find as much common ground as he honestly could, for this was one of the most characteristic maxims of his propagandism. But a man who had never been brought up in the popular religion, and who had been brought up in habits of the most scrupulous fair dealing with his own understanding; who had never closed his mind to new truths from likely sources, but whose character was formed, and whose mind was made up, on the central points of opinion, was not in a position to derive much benefit from those who in all respects represent a less advanced stage of mental development. On the other hand, all the benefit which they were in a position to derive from him could be adequately

secured by reading what he wrote. Perhaps there is nothing wiser among the wise things written in the Autobiography than the remarks on the fact that persons of any mental superiority, who greatly frequent society, are greatly deteriorated by it. 'Not to mention loss of time, the tone of their feelings is lowered: they become less in earnest about those of their opinions respecting which they must remain silent in the society they frequent: they come to look on their most elevated objects as unpractical, or at least too remote from realisation to be more than a vision or a theory: and if, more fortunate than most, they retain their higher principles unimpaired, yet with respect to the persons and affairs of their own day, they insensibly adopt the modes of feeling and judgment in which they can hope for sympathy from the company they keep' (p. 228). That a man loses something, nay, that he loses much, by being deprived of animating intercourse with other men, Mr. Mill would probably have been the first to admit. Where that intercourse can be had, nothing is more fit to make the judgment robust, nothing more fit to freshen and revive our interests, and to clothe them with reality. Even second-rate companionship has some clear advantages. The question is, whether these advantages outweigh the equally clear disadvantages. Mr. Mill was persuaded that they do not.

Those whom disgust at the aimlessness and insignificance of most of our social intercourse may dispose to withdrawal from it—and their number will probably

increase as the reaction against intellectual flippancy goes on—will do well to remember that Mr. Mill's retirement and his vindication of it sprang from no moral valetudinarianism. He did not retire to gratify any self-indulgent whim, but only in order to work the more uninterruptedly *and definitely*. The Autobiography tells us what pains he took to keep himself informed of all that was going on in every part of the world. 'In truth, the modern facilities of communication have not only removed all the disadvantages, to a political writer in tolerably easy circumstances, of distance from the scene of political action, but have converted them into advantages. The immediate and regular receipt of newspapers and periodicals keeps him *au courant* of even the most temporary politics, and gives him a much more correct view of the state and progress of opinion than he could acquire by personal contact with individuals; for every one's social intercourse is more or less limited to particular sets or classes, whose impressions and no others reach him through that channel; and experience has taught me that those who give their time to the absorbing claims of what is called society, not having leisure to keep up a large acquaintance with the organs of opinion, remain much more ignorant of the general state either of the public mind, or of the active and instructed part of it, than a recluse who reads the newspapers need be. There are, no doubt, disadvantages in too long a separation from one's country—in not occasionally renewing

one's impressions of the light in which men and things appear when seen from a position in the midst of them; but the deliberate judgment formed at a distance, and undisturbed by inequalities of perspective, is the most to be depended on, even for application in practice. Alternating between the two positions, I combined the advantages of both.' Those who knew him will perhaps agree that he was more widely and precisely informed of the transactions of the day, in every department of activity all over the world, than any other person of their acquaintance. People should remember, further, that though Mr. Mill saw comparatively little of men after a certain time, yet he was for many years of his life in constant and active relations with men. It was to his experience in the Indian Office that he attributed some of his most serviceable qualities, especially this: 'I learnt how to obtain the best I could, when I could not obtain everything; instead of being indignant or dispirited because I could not have entirely my own way, to be pleased and encouraged when I could have the smallest part of it; and when even that could not be, to bear with complete equanimity the being overruled altogether' (pp. 85, 86). In these words we seem almost to hear the modest and simple tones of the writer's own voice.

THE LIFE OF GEORGE ELIOT.[1]

THE illustrious woman who is the subject of these volumes makes a remark to her publisher which is at least as relevant now as it was then. Can nothing be done, she asks, by dispassionate criticism towards the reform of our national habits in the matter of literary biography? 'Is it anything short of odious that as soon as a man is dead his desk should be raked, and every insignificant memorandum which he never meant for the public be printed for the gossiping amusement of people too idle to reread his books?' Autobiography, she says, at least saves a man or a woman that the world is curious about, from the publication of a string of mistakes called Memoirs. Even to autobiography, however, she confesses her deep repugnance unless it can be written so as to involve neither self-glorification nor impeachment of others—a condition, by the way, with which hardly any, save Mill's, can be said to comply. 'I like,' she proceeds, 'that *He being dead yet speaketh* should have quite another meaning than that' (iii.

[1] *George Eliot's Life.* By J. W. Cross. Three volumes. Blackwood and Sons. 1885.

226, 297, 307). She shows the same fastidious apprehension still more clearly in another way. 'I have destroyed almost all my friends' letters to me,' she says, 'because they were only intended for my eyes, and could only fall into the hands of persons who knew little of the writers if I allowed them to remain till after my death. In proportion as I love every form of piety — which is venerating love — I hate hard curiosity; and, unhappily, my experience has impressed me with the sense that hard curiosity is the more common temper of mind' (ii. 286). There is probably little difference among us in respect of such experience as that.

Much biography, perhaps we might say most, is hardly above the level of that 'personal talk,' to which Wordsworth sagely preferred long barren silence, the flapping of the flame of his cottage fire, and the undersong of the kettle on the hob. It would not, then, have much surprised us if George Eliot had insisted that her works should remain the only commemoration of her life. There be some who think that those who have enriched the world with great thoughts and fine creations, might best be content to rest unmarked 'where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,' leaving as little work to the literary executor, except of the purely crematory sort, as did Aristotle, Plato, Shakespeare, and some others whose names the world will not willingly let die. But this is a stoic's doctrine; the objector may easily retort that if it had been sternly acted on, we should have known very

very little about Dr. Johnson, and nothing about Socrates.

This is but an ungracious prelude to some remarks upon a book, which must be pronounced a striking success. There will be very little dispute as to the fact that the editor of these memorials of George Eliot has done his work with excellent taste, judgment, and sense. He found no autobiography nor fragment of one, but he has skilfully shaped a kind of autobiography by a plan which, so far as we know, he is justified in calling new, and which leaves her life to write itself in extracts from her letters and journals. With the least possible obtrusion from the biographer, the original pieces are formed into a connected whole 'that combines a narrative of day-to-day life with the play of light and shade which only letters written in serious moods can give.' The idea is a good one, and Mr. Cross deserves great credit for it. We may hope that its success will encourage imitators. Certainly there are drawbacks. We miss the animation of mixed narrative. There is, too, a touch of monotony in listening for so long to the voice of a single speaker addressing others who are silent behind a screen. But Mr. Cross could not, we think, have devised a better way of dealing with his material: it is simple, modest, and effective.

George Eliot, after all, led the life of a studious recluse, with none of the bustle, variety, motion, and large communication with the outer world, that justified Lockhart and Moore in making a long story of

the lives of Scott and Byron. Even here, among men of letters, who were also men of action and of great sociability, are not all biographies too long? Let any sensible reader turn to the shelf where his Lives repose; we shall be surprised if he does not find that nearly every one of them, taking the present century alone, and including such splendid and attractive subjects as Goethe, Hume, Romilly, Mackintosh, Horner, Chalmers, Arnold, Southey, Cowper, would not have been all the better for judicious curtailment. Lockhart, who wrote the longest, wrote also the shortest, the Life of Burns; and the shortest is the best, in spite of defects which would only have been worse if the book had been bigger. It is to be feared that, conscientious and honourable as his self-denial has been, even Mr. Cross has not wholly resisted the natural and besetting error of the biographer. Most people will think that the hundred pages of the Italian tour (vol. ii.), and some other not very remarkable impressions of travel, might as well or better have been left out.

As a mere letter-writer, George Eliot will not rank among the famous masters of what is usually considered especially a woman's art. She was too busy in serious work to have leisure for that most delightful way of wasting time. Besides that, she had by nature none of that fluency, rapidity, abandonment, pleasant volubility, which make letters amusing, captivating, or piquant. What Mr. Cross says of her as the mistress of a *salon*, is true of her for the most

part as a correspondent:—'Playing around many disconnected subjects, in talk, neither interested nor amused her much. She took things too seriously, and seldom found the effort of entertaining compensated by the gain'(iii. 335). There is the outpouring of ardent feeling for her friends, sobering down, as life goes on, into a crooning kindliness, affectionate and honest, but often tinged with considerable self-consciousness. It was said of some one that his epigrams did honour to his heart; in the reverse direction we occasionally feel that George Eliot's effusive playfulness does honour to her head. It lacks simplicity and *verve*. Even in an invitation to dinner, the words imply a grave sense of responsibility on both sides, and sense of responsibility is fatal to the charm of familiar correspondence.

As was inevitable in one whose mind was so habitually turned to the deeper elements of life, she lets fall the pearls of wise speech even in short notes. Here are one or two:—

'My own experience and development deepen every day my conviction that our moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathise with individual suffering and individual joy.'

'If there is one attitude more odious to me than any other of the many attitudes of "knowingness," it is that air of lofty superiority to the vulgar.' She will soon find out that I am a very commonplace woman.'

'It so often happens that others are measuring us

by our past self while we are looking back on that self with a mixture of disgust and sorrow.'

The following is one of the best examples, one of the few examples, of her best manner:—

I have been made rather unhappy by my husband's impulsive proposal about Christmas. We are dull old persons, and your two sweet young ones ought to find each Christmas a new bright bead to string on their memory, whereas to spend the time with us would be to string on a dark shrivelled berry. They ought to have a group of young creatures to be joyful with. Our own children always spend their Christmas with Gertrude's family; and we have usually taken our sober merry-making with friends out of town. Illness among these will break our custom this year; and thus *mein Mann*, feeling that our Christmas was free, considered how very much he liked being with you, omitting the other side of the question—namely, our total lack of means to make a suitably joyous meeting, a real festival, for Phil and Margaret. I was conscious of this lack in the very moment of the proposal, and the consciousness has been pressing on me more and more painfully ever since. Even my husband's affectionate hopefulness cannot withstand my melancholy demonstration. So pray consider the kill-joy proposition as entirely retracted, and give us something of yourselves only on simple black-letter days, when the Herald Angels have not been raising expectations early in the morning.

This is very pleasant, but such pieces are rare, and the infirmity of human nature has sometimes made us sigh over these pages at the recollection of the cordial cheeriness of Scott's letters, the high spirits of Macaulay, the graceful levity of Voltaire, the rattling

dare-devilry of Byron. Epistolary stilts among men of letters went out of fashion with Pope, who, as was said, thought that unless every period finished with a conceit, the letter was not worth the postage. Poor spirits cannot be the explanation of the stiffness in George Eliot's case, for no letters in the English language are so full of playfulness and charm as those of Cowper, and he was habitually sunk in gulfs deeper and blacker than George Eliot's own. It was sometimes observed of her, that in her conversation, *elle s'écoutait quand elle parlait*—she seemed to be listening to her own voice while she spoke. It must be allowed that we are not always free from an impression of self-listening, even in the most caressing of the letters before us.

This is not much better, however, than trifling. I daresay that if a lively Frenchman could have watched the inspired Pythia on the sublime tripod, he would have cried, *Elle s'écoute quand elle parle.* When everything of that kind has been said, we have the profound satisfaction, which is not quite a matter of course in the history of literature, of finding after all that the woman and the writer were one. The life does not belie the books, nor private conduct stultify public profession. We close the third volume of the biography, as we have so often closed the third volume of her novels, feeling to the very core that in spite of a style that the French call *alambiqué*, in spite of tiresome double and treble distillations of phraseology, in spite of fatiguing moralities, gravities, and ponder-

osities, we have still been in communion with a high and commanding intellect and a great nature. We are vexed by pedantries that recall the *précieuses* of the Hôtel Rambouillet, but we know that she had the soul of the most heroic women in history. We crave more of the Olympian serenity that makes action natural and repose refreshing, but we cannot miss the edification of a life marked by indefatigable labour after generous purposes, by an unsparing struggle for duty, and by steadfast and devout fellowship with lofty thoughts.

Those who know Mr. Myers's essay on George Eliot will not have forgotten its most imposing passage :—

> I remember how at Cambridge, I walked with her once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity, on an evening of rainy May ; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men,—the words *God*, *Immortality*, *Duty*,—pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the *first*, how unbelievable the *second*, and yet how peremptory and absolute the *third*. Never, perhaps, had sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing law. I listened, and night fell ; her grave, majestic countenance turned toward me like a Sibyl's in the gloom ; it was as though she withdrew from my grasp, one by one, the two scrolls of promise, and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates.

To many, the relation which was the most important event in George Eliot's life will seem one of those irretrievable errors which reduce all talk of duty

to a mockery. It is inevitable that this should be so, and those who disregard a social law have little right to complain. Men and women whom in every other respect it would be monstrous to call bad, have taken this particular law into their own hands before now, and committed themselves to conduct of which 'magnanimity owes no account to prudence.' But if they had sense and knew what they were about, they have braced themselves to endure the disapproval of a majority fortunately more prudential than themselves. The world is busy, and its instruments are clumsy. It cannot know all the facts; it has neither time nor material for unravelling all the complexities of motive, or for distinguishing mere libertinage from grave and deliberate moral misjudgment; it is protecting itself as much as it is condemning the offenders. On all this, then, we need have neither sophistry nor cant. But those who seek something deeper than a verdict for the honest working purpose of leaving cards and inviting to dinner, may feel, as has been observed by a contemporary writer, that men and women are more fairly judged, if judge them we must, by the way in which they bear the burden of an error than by the decision that laid the burden on their lives. Some idea of this kind was in her own mind when she wrote to her most intimate friend in 1857, 'If I live five years longer, the positive result of my existence on the side of truth and goodness will outweigh the small negative good that would have consisted in my not doing anything to

shock others' (i. 461). This urgent desire to balance the moral account may have had something to do with that laborious sense of responsibility which weighed so heavily on her soul, and had so equivocal an effect upon her art. Whatever else is to be said of this particular union, nobody can deny that the picture on which it left a mark was an exhibition of extraordinary self-denial, energy, and persistency in the cultivation and the use of great gifts and powers for what their possessor believed to be the highest objects for society and mankind.

A more perfect companionship, one on a higher intellectual level, or of more sustained mental activity, is nowhere recorded. Lewes's mercurial temperament contributed as much as the powerful mind of his consort to prevent their seclusion from degenerating into an owlish stagnation. To the very last (1878) he retained his extraordinary buoyancy. 'Nothing but death could quench that bright flame. Even on his worst days he had always a good story to tell; and I remember on one occasion in the drawing-room at Witley, between two bouts of pain, he sang through with great *brio*, though without much voice, the greater portion of the tenor part in the *Barber of Seville*, George Eliot playing his accompaniment, and both of them thoroughly enjoying the fun' (iii. 334). All this gaiety, his inexhaustible vivacity, the facility of his transitions from brilliant levity to a keen seriousness, the readiness of his mental response, and the wide range of intellectual accomplishments that

were much more than superficial, made him a source of incessant and varied stimulation. Even those, and there were some, who thought that his gaiety bordered on flippancy, that his genial self-content often came near to shockingly bad taste, and that his reminiscences of poor Mr. Fitzball and the green-room and all the rest of the Bohemia in which he had once dwelt, were too racy for his company, still found it hard to resist the alert intelligence with which he rose to every good topic, and the extraordinary heartiness and spontaneity with which the wholesome spring of human laughter was touched in him.

Lewes had plenty of egotism, not to give it a more unamiable name, but it never mastered his intellectual sincerity. George Eliot describes him as one of the few human beings she has known who will, in the heat of an argument, see, and straightway confess, that he is in the wrong, instead of trying to shift his ground or use any other device of vanity. 'The intense happiness of our union,' she wrote to a friend, 'is derived in a high degree from the perfect freedom with which we each follow and declare our own impressions. In this respect I know *no* man so great as he—that difference of opinion rouses no egotistic irritation in him, and that he is ready to admit that another argument is the stronger the moment his intellect recognises it' (ii. 279). This will sound very easy to the dispassionate reader, because it is so obviously just and proper, but if the dispassionate reader ever tries, he may find the virtue not so easy

as it looks. Finally, and above all, we can never forget in Lewes's case how much true elevation and stability of character was implied in the unceasing reverence, gratitude, and devotion with which for five-and-twenty years he treated her to whom he owed all his happiness, and who most truly, in his own words (ii. 76), had made his life a new birth.

The reader will be mistaken if he should infer from such passages as abound in her letters that George Eliot had any particular weakness for domestic or any other kind of idolatry. George Sand, in *Lucrezia Floriani*, where she drew so unkind a picture of Chopin, has described her own life and character as marked by 'a great facility for illusions, a blind benevolence of judgment, a tenderness of heart that was inexhaustible; consequently great precipitancy, many mistakes, much weakness, fits of heroic devotion to unworthy objects, enormous force applied to an end that was wretched in truth and fact, but sublime in her thought.' George Eliot had none of this facility. Nor was general benignity in her at all of the poor kind that is incompatible with a great deal of particular censure. Universal benevolence never lulled an active critical faculty, nor did she conceive true humility as at all consisting in hiding from an impostor that you have found him out. Like Cardinal Newman, for whose beautiful passage at the end of the *Apologia* she expresses such richly deserved admiration (ii. 387), she unites to the gift of unction and brotherly love a capacity for giving an extremely

shrewd nip to a brother whom she does not love. Her passion for Thomas-a-Kempis did not prevent her, and there was no reason why it should, from dealing very faithfully with a friend, for instance (ii. 271); from describing Mr. Buckle as a conceited, ignorant man; or castigating Brougham and other people in slashing reviews; or otherwise from showing that great expansiveness of the affections went with a remarkably strong, hard, masculine, positive, judging head.

The benefits that George Eliot gained from her exclusive companionship with a man of lively talents were not without some compensating drawbacks. The keen stimulation and incessant strain, unrelieved by variety of daily intercourse, and never diversified by participation in the external activities of the world, tended to bring about a loaded, over-conscious, over-anxious state of mind, which was not only not wholesome in itself, but was inconsistent with the full freshness and strength of artistic work. The presence of the real world in his life has, in all but one or two cases, been one element of the novelist's highest success in the world of imaginative creation. George Eliot had no greater favourite than Scott, and when a series of little books upon English men of letters was planned, she said that she thought that writer among us the happiest to whom it should fall to deal with Scott. But Scott lived full in the life of his fellow-men. Even of Wordsworth, her other favourite, though he was not a creative artist, we

may say that he daily saturated himself in those natural elements and effects, which were the material, the suggestion, and the sustaining inspiration of his consoling and fortifying poetry. George Eliot did not live in the midst of her material, but aloof from it and outside of it. Heaven forbid that this should seem to be said by way of censure. Both her health and other considerations made all approach to busy sociability in any of its shapes both unwelcome and impossible. But in considering the relation of her manner of life to her work, her creations, her meditations, one cannot but see that when compared with some writers of her own sex and age, she is constantly bookish, artificial, and mannered. She is this because she fed her art too exclusively, first on the memories of her youth, and next from books, pictures, statues, instead of from the living model, as seen in its actual motion. It is direct calls and personal claims from without that make fiction alive. Jane Austen bore her part in the little world of the parlour that she described. The writer of *Sylvia's Lovers*, whose work George Eliot appreciated with unaffected generosity (i. 305), was the mother of children, and was surrounded by the wholesome actualities of the family. The authors of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* passed their days in one long succession of wild, stormy, squalid, anxious, and miserable scenes—almost as romantic, as poetic, and as tragic, to use George Eliot's words, as their own stories. George Sand eagerly shared, even to the pitch of passionate

tumult and disorder, in the emotions, the aspirations, the ardour, the great conflicts and controversies of her time. In every one of these, their daily closeness to the real life of the world has given a vitality to their work which we hardly expect that even the next generation will find in more than one or two of the romances of George Eliot. It may even come to pass that their position will be to hers as that of Fielding is to Richardson in our own day.

In a letter to Mr. Harrison, which is printed here (ii. 441), George Eliot describes her own method as 'the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit.' The passage recalls a discussion one day at the Priory in 1877. She was speaking of the different methods of the poetic or creative art, and said that she began with moods, thoughts, passions, and then invented the story for their sake, and fitted it to them; Shakespeare, on the other hand, picked up a story that struck him, and then proceeded to work in the moods, thoughts, passions, as they came to him in the course of meditation on the story. We hardly need the result to convince us that Shakespeare chose the better part.

The influence of her reserved fashion of daily life was heightened by the literary exclusiveness which of set purpose she imposed upon herself. 'The less an author hears about himself,' she says, in one place, 'the better.' 'It is my rule, very strictly observed,

not to read the criticisms on my writings. For years I have found this abstinence necessary to preserve me from that discouragement as an artist, which ill-judged praise, no less than ill-judged blame, tends to produce in us.' George Eliot pushed this repugnance to criticism beyond the personal reaction of it upon the artist, and more than disparaged its utility, even in the most competent and highly trained hands. She finds that the diseased spot in the literary culture of our time is touched with the finest point by the saying of La Bruyère, that 'the pleasure of criticism robs us of the pleasure of being keenly moved by very fine things' (iii. 327). 'It seems to me,' she writes (ii. 412), 'much better to read a man's own writings than to read what others say about him, especially when the man is first-rate and the others third-rate. As Goethe said long ago about Spinoza, "I always preferred to learn from the man himself what *he* thought, rather than to hear from some one else what he ought to have thought."' As if the scholar will not always be glad to do both, to study his author and not to refuse the help of the rightly prepared commentator; as if even Goethe himself would not have been all the better acquainted with Spinoza if he could have read Mr. Pollock's book upon him. But on this question Mr. Arnold has fought a brilliant battle, and to him George Eliot's heresies may well be left.

On the personal point whether an author should ever hear of himself, George Eliot oddly enough con-

tradicts herself in a casual remark upon Bulwer. 'I have a great respect,' she says, 'for the energetic industry which has made the most of his powers. He has been writing diligently for more than thirty years, constantly improving his position, and profiting by the lessons of public opinion and of other writers' (ii. 322). But if it is true that the less an author hears about himself the better, how are these salutary 'lessons of public opinion' to penetrate to him? 'Rubens,' she says, writing from Munich in 1858 (ii. 28), 'gives me more pleasure than any other painter whether right or wrong. More than any one else he makes me feel that painting is a great art, and that he was a great artist. His are such real breathing men and women, moved by passions, not mincing, and grimacing, and posing in mere imitation of passion.' But Rubens did not concentrate his intellect on his own ponderings, nor shut out the wholesome chastenings of praise and blame, lest they should discourage his inspiration. Beethoven, another of the chief objects of George Eliot's veneration, bore all the rough stress of an active and troublesome calling, though of the musician, if of any, we may say, that his is the art of self-absorption.

Hence, delightful and inspiring as it is to read this story of diligent and discriminating cultivation, of accurate truth and real erudition and beauty, not vaguely but methodically interpreted, one has some of the sensations of the moral and intellectual hothouse. Mental hygiene is apt to lead to mental

valetudinarianism. 'The ignorant journalist,' may be left to the torment which George Eliot wished that she could inflict on one of those literary slovens whose manuscripts bring even the most philosophic editor to the point of exasperation: 'I should like to stick red-hot skewers through the writer, whose style is as sprawling as his handwriting.' By all means. But much that even the most sympathetic reader finds repellent in George Eliot's later work might perhaps never have been, if Mr. Lewes had not practised with more than Russian rigour a censorship of the press and the post-office which kept every disagreeable whisper scrupulously from her ear. To stop every draft with sandbags, screens, and curtains, and to limit one's exercise to a drive in a well-warmed brougham with the windows drawn up, may save a few annoying colds in the head, but the end of the process will be the manufacture of an invalid.

Whatever view we may take of the precise connection between what she read, or abstained from reading, and what she wrote, no studious man or woman can look without admiration and envy on the breadth, variety, seriousness, and energy, with which she set herself her tasks and executed them. She says in one of her letters, 'there is something more piteous almost than soapless poverty in the application of feminine incapacity to literature' (ii. 16). Nobody has ever taken the responsibilities of literature more ardently in earnest. She was accustomed to read aloud to Mr. Lewes three hours a day, and her pri-

vate reading, except when she was engaged in the actual stress of composition, must have filled as many more. His extraordinary alacrity and her brooding intensity of mind prevented these hours from being that leisurely process in slippers and easy-chair which passes with many for the practice of literary cultivation. Much of her reading was for the direct purposes of her own work. The young lady who begins to write historic novels out of her own head will find something much to her advantage if she will refer to the list of books read by George Eliot during the latter half of 1861, when she was meditating *Romola* (ii. 325). Apart from immediate needs and uses, no student of our time has known better the solace, the delight, the guidance that abide in great writings. Nobody who did not share the scholar's enthusiasm could have described the blind scholar in his library in the adorable fifth chapter of *Romola;* and we feel that she must have copied out with keen gusto of her own those words of Petrarch which she puts into old Bardo's mouth—'*Libri medullitus delectant, colloquuntur, consulunt, et vira quadam nobis atque arguta familiaritate jungnntur.*'

As for books that are not books, as Milton bade us do with 'neat repasts of wine,' she wisely spared to interpose them oft. Her standards of knowledge were those of the erudite and the savant, and even in the region of beauty she was never content with any but definite impressions. In one place in these volumes, by the way, she makes a remark curiously

inconsistent with the usual scientific attitude of her mind. She has been reading Darwin's *Origin of Species*, on which she makes the truly astonishing criticism that it is 'sadly wanting in illustrative facts,' and that 'it is not impressive from want of luminous and orderly presentation' (ii. 43-48). Then she says that 'the development theory, and all other explanation of processes by which things came to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under processes.' This position it does not now concern us to discuss, but at least it is in singular discrepancy with her strong habitual preference for accurate and quantitative knowledge, over vague and misty moods in the region of the unknowable and the unreachable.

George Eliot's means of access to books were very full. She knew French, German, Italian, and Spanish accurately. Greek and Latin, Mr. Cross tells us, she could read with thorough delight to herself; though after the appalling specimen of Mill's juvenile Latinity that Mr. Bain has disinterred, the fastidious collegian may be sceptical of the scholarship of prodigies. Hebrew was her favourite study to the end of her days. People commonly supposed that she had been inoculated with an artificial taste for science by her companion. We now learn that she took a decided interest in natural science long before she made Mr. Lewes's acquaintance, and many of the roundabout pedantries that displeased people in her latest writings, and were set down to his account,

appeared in her composition before she had ever exchanged a word with him.

All who knew her well enough were aware that she had what Mr. Cross describes as 'limitless persistency in application.' This is an old account of genius, but nobody illustrates more effectively the infinite capacity of taking pains. In reading, in looking at pictures, in playing difficult music, in talking, she was equally importunate in the search, and equally insistent on mastery. Her faculty of sustained concentration was part of her immense intellectual power. 'Continuous thought did not fatigue her. She could keep her mind on the stretch hour after hour; the body might give way, but the brain remained unwearied' (iii. 422). It is only a trifling illustration of the infection of her indefatigable quality of taking pains, that Lewes should have formed the important habit of rewriting every page of his work, even of short articles for Reviews, before letting it go to the press. The journal shows what sore pain and travail composition was to her. She wrote the last volume of *Adam Bede* in six weeks; she 'could not help writing it fast, because it was written under the stress of emotion.' But what a prodigious contrast between her pace and Walter Scott's twelve volumes a year! Like many other people of powerful brains, she united strong and clear general retentiveness with a weak and untrustworthy verbal memory. 'She never could trust herself to write a quotation without verifying it.' 'What courage and patience,' she says of some

one else, 'are wanted for every life that aims to produce anything,' and her own existence was one long and painful sermon on that text.

Over few lives have the clouds of mental dejection hung in such heavy unmoving banks. Nearly every chapter is strewn with melancholy words. 'I cannot help thinking more of your illness than of the pleasure in prospect—according to my foolish nature, which is always prone to live in past pain.' The same sentiment is the mournful refrain that runs through all. Her first resounding triumph, the success of *Adam Bede*, instead of buoyancy and exultation, only adds a fresh sense of the weight upon her future life. 'The self-questioning whether my nature will be able to meet the heavy demands upon it, both of personal duty and intellectual production—presses upon me almost continually in a way that prevents me even from tasting the quiet joy I might have in the *work done*. I feel no regret that the fame, as such, brings no pleasure; but it *is* a grief to me that I do not constantly feel strong in thankfulness that my past life has vindicated its uses.'

Romola seems to have been composed in constant gloom. 'I remember my wife telling me, at Witley,' says Mr. Cross, 'how cruelly she had suffered at Dorking from working under a leaden weight at this time. The writing of *Romola* ploughed into her more than any of her other books. She told me she could put her finger on it as marking a well-defined transition in her life. In her own words, "I began it a

young woman—I finished it an old woman."' She calls upon herself to make 'greater efforts against indolence and the despondency that comes from too egoistic a dread of failure.' 'This is the last entry I mean to make in my old book in which I wrote for the first time at Geneva in 1849. What moments of despair I passed through after that—despair that life would ever be made precious to me by the consciousness that I lived to some good purpose! It was that sort of despair that sucked away the sap of half the hours which might have been filled by energetic youthful activity; and the same demon tries to get hold of me again whenever an old work is dismissed and a new one is being meditated' (ii. 307). One day the entry is: 'Horrible scepticism about all things paralysing my mind. Shall I ever be good for anything again? Ever do anything again?' On another, she describes herself to a trusted friend as 'a mind morbidly desponding, and a consciousness tending more and more to consist in memories of error and imperfection rather than in a strengthening sense of achievement.' We have to turn to such books as Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* to find any parallel to such wretchedness.

Times were not wanting when the sun strove to shine through the gloom, when the resistance to melancholy was not wholly a failure, and when, as she says, she felt that Dante was right in condemning to the Stygian marsh those who had been sad under the blessed sunlight. 'Sad were we in the sweet air

that is gladdened by the sun, bearing sluggish smoke in our hearts; now lie we sadly here in the black ooze.' But still for the most part sad she remained in the sweet air, and the look of pain that haunted her eyes and brow even in her most genial and animated moments, only told too truly the story of her inner life.

That from this central gloom a shadow should spread to her work was unavoidable. It would be rash to compare George Eliot with Tacitus, with Dante, with Pascal. A novelist—for as a poet, after trying hard to think otherwise, most of us find her magnificent but unreadable—as a novelist bound by the conditions of her art to deal in a thousand trivialities of human character and situation, she has none of their severity of form. But she alone of moderns has their note of sharp-cut melancholy, of sombre rumination, of brief disdain. Living in a time when humanity has been raised, whether formally or informally, into a religion, she draws a painted curtain of pity before the tragic scene. Still the attentive ear catches from time to time the accents of an unrelenting voice, that proves her kindred with those three mighty spirits and stern monitors of men. In George Eliot, a reader with a conscience may be reminded of the saying that when a man opens Tacitus he puts himself in the confessional. She was no vague dreamer over the folly and the weakness of men, and the cruelty and blindness of destiny. Hers is not the dejection of the poet who 'could lie down

like a tired child, And weep away this life of care,' as Shelley at Naples; nor is it the despairing misery that moved Cowper in the awful verses of the *Castaway*. It was not such self-pity as wrung from Burns the cry to life, 'Thou art a galling load, A long, a rough, a weary road, To wretches such as I;' nor such general sense of the woes of the race as made Keats think of the world as a place where men sit and hear each other groan, 'Where but to think is to be full of sorrow, And leaden-eyed despairs.' She was as far removed from the plangent reverie of Rousseau as from the savage truculence of Swift. Intellectual training had given her the spirit of order and proportion, of definiteness and measure, and this marks her alike from the great sentimentalists and the sweeping satirists. 'Pity and fairness,' as she beautifully says (iii. 317), 'are two little words which, carried out, would embrace the utmost delicacies of the moral life.' But hers is not seldom the severe fairness of the judge, and the pity that may go with putting on the black cap after a conviction for high treason. In the midst of many an easy flowing page, the reader is surprised by some bitter aside, some judgment of intense and concentrated irony with the flash of a blade in it, some biting sentence where lurks the stern disdain and the anger of Tacitus, and Dante, and Pascal. Souls like these are not born for happiness.

This is not the occasion for an elaborate discussion

of George Eliot's place in the mental history of her time, but her biography shows that she travelled along the road that was trodden by not a few in her day. She started from that fervid evangelicalism which has made the base of many a powerful character in this century, from Cardinal Newman downwards. Then with curious rapidity she threw it all off, and embraced with equal zeal the rather harsh and crude negations which were then associated with the *Westminster Review*. The second stage did not last much longer than the first. 'Religious and moral sympathy with the historical life of man,' she said (ii. 363), 'is the larger half of culture;' and this sympathy, which was the fruit of her culture, had by the time she was thirty become the new seed of a positive faith and a semi-conservative creed. Here is a passage from a letter of 1862 (she had translated Strauss, we may remind ourselves, in 1845, and Feuerbach in 1854):—

> Pray don't ask me ever again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended to such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no-faith, to have any negative propagandism in me. In fact, I have very little sympathy with Free-thinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines. I care only to know, if possible, the lasting meaning that lies in all religious doctrine from the beginning till now (ii. 243).

Eleven years later the same tendency had deepened and gone farther:—

All the great religions of the world, historically considered, are rightly the objects of deep reverence and sympathy—they are the record of spiritual struggles, which are the types of our own. This is to me preeminently true of Hebrewism and Christianity, on which my own youth was nourished. And in this sense I have no antagonism towards any religious belief, but a strong outflow of sympathy. Every community met to worship the highest Good (which is understood to be expressed by God) carries me along in its main current; and if there were not reasons against my following such an inclination, I should go to church or chapel, constantly, for the sake of the delightful emotions of fellowship which come over me in religious assemblies—the very nature of such assemblies being the recognition of a binding belief or spiritual law, which is to lift us into willing obedience and save us from the slavery of unregulated passion or impulse. And with regard to other people, it seems to me that those who have no definite conviction which constitutes a protesting faith, may often more beneficially cherish the good within them and be better members of society by a conformity based on the recognised good in the public belief, than by a nonconformity which has nothing but negatives to utter. *Not*, of course, if the conformity would be accompanied by a consciousness of hypocrisy. That is a question for the individual conscience to settle. But there is enough to be said on the different points of view from which conformity may be regarded, to hinder a ready judgment against those who continue to conform after ceasing to believe in the ordinary sense. But with the utmost largeness of allowance for the difficulty of deciding in special cases, it must remain true that the highest lot is to have definite beliefs about which you feel that 'necessity is laid upon you' to declare them, as something better which you are bound to try and give to those who have the worse (iii. 215-217).

These volumes contain many passages in the same sense—as, of course, her books contain them too. She was a constant reader of the Bible, and the *Imitatio* was never far from her hand. 'She particularly enjoyed reading aloud some of the finest chapters of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and St. Paul's Epistles. The Bible and our elder English poets best suited the organ-like tones of her voice, which required for their full effect a certain solemnity and majesty of rhythm.' She once expressed to a younger friend, who shared her opinions, her sense of the loss which they had in being unable to practise the old ordinances of family prayer. 'I hope,' she says, 'we are well out of that phase in which the most philosophic view of the past was held to be a smiling survey of human folly, and when the wisest man was supposed to be one who could sympathise with no age but the age to come' (ii. 308).

For this wise reaction she was no doubt partially indebted, as so many others have been, to the teaching of Comte. Unquestionably the fundamental ideas had come into her mind at a much earlier period, when, for example, she was reading Mr. R. W. Mackay's *Progress of the Intellect* (1850, i. 253). But it was Comte who enabled her to systematise these ideas, and to give them that 'definiteness,' which, as these pages show in a hundred places, was the quality that she sought before all others alike in men and their thoughts. She always remained at a respectful distance from complete adherence to Comte's scheme, but she was never tired of protesting that he was a

really great thinker, that his famous survey of the Middle Ages in the fifth volume of the *Positive Philosophy* was full of luminous ideas, and that she had thankfully learned much from it. Wordsworth, again, was dear to her in no small degree on the strength of such passages as that from the *Prelude*, which is the motto of one of the last chapters of her last novel:—

> The human nature with which I felt
> That I belonged and reverenced with love,
> Was not a persistent presence, but a spirit
> Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
> Of evidence from monuments, erect,
> Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
> In earth, *the widely scattered wreck sublime*
> *Of vanished nations.*

Or this again, also from the *Prelude* (see iii. 389):—

> There is
> One great society alone on earth:
> The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Underneath this growth and diversity of opinion we see George Eliot's oneness of character, just, for that matter, as we see it in Mill's long and grave march from the uncompromising denials instilled into him by his father, then through Wordsworthian mysticism and Coleridgean conservatism, down to the pale belief and dim starlight faith of his posthumous volume. George Eliot was more austere, more unflinching, and of ruder intellectual constancy than Mill. She never withdrew from the position that she had taken up, of denying and rejecting; she stood

to that to the end: what she did was to advance to the far higher perception that denial and rejection are not the aspects best worth attending to or dwelling upon. She had little patience with those who fear that the doctrine of protoplasm must dry up the springs of human effort. Any one who trembles at that catastrophe may profit by a powerful remonstrance of hers in the pages before us (iii. 245-250, also 228).

The consideration of molecular physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action, any more than it is the direct means of composing a noble picture or of enjoying great music. One might as well hope to dissect one's own body and be merry in doing it, as take molecular physics (in which you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human) to be your dominant guide, your determiner of motives, in what is solely human. That every study has its bearing on every other is true; but pain and relief, love and sorrow, have their peculiar history which make an experience and knowledge over and above the swing of atoms.

With regard to the pains and limitations of one's personal lot, I suppose there is not a single man or woman who has not more or less need of that stoical resignation which is often a hidden heroism, or who, in considering his or her past history, is not aware that it has been cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish action of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation of life. And to my mind there can be no stronger motive than this perception, to an energetic effort that the lives nearest to us shall not suffer in a like manner from *us*.

As to duration and the way in which it affects your view of the human history, what is really the difference to your imagination between infinitude and billions when

you have to consider the value of human experience? Will you say that since your life has a term of threescore years and ten, it was really a matter of indifference whether you were a cripple with a wretched skin disease, or an active creature with a mind at large for the enjoyment of knowledge, and with a nature which has attracted others to you?

For herself, she remained in the position described in one of her letters in 1860 (ii. 283):—'I have faith in the working out of higher possibilities than the Catholic or any other Church has presented; and those who have strength to wait and endure are bound to accept no formula which their whole souls—their intellect, as well as their emotions—do not embrace with entire reverence. The highest calling and election is *to do without opium*, and live through all our pain with conscious, clear-eyed endurance.' She would never accept the common optimism. As she says here:—'Life, though a good to men on the whole, is a doubtful good to many, and to some not a good at all. To my thought it is a source of constant mental distortion to make the denial of this a part of religion—to go on pretending things are better than they are.'

Of the afflicting dealings with the world of spirits, which in those days were comparatively limited to the untutored minds of America, but which since have come to exert so singular a fascination for some of the most brilliant of George Eliot's younger friends (see iii. 204), she thought as any sensible Philistine among us persists in thinking to this day:—

If it were another spirit aping Charlotte Brontë—if here and there at rare spots and among people of a certain temperament, or even at many spots and among people of all temperaments, tricksy spirits are liable to rise as a sort of earth-bubbles and set furniture in movement, and tell things which we either know already or should be as well without knowing—I must frankly confess that I have but a feeble interest in these doings, feeling my life very short for the supreme and awful revelations of a more orderly and intelligible kind which I shall die with an imperfect knowledge of. If there were miserable spirits whom we could help—then I think we should pause and have patience with their trivial-mindedness; but otherwise I don't feel bound to study them more than I am bound to study the special follies of a peculiar phase of human society. Others, who feel differently, and are attracted towards this study, are making an experiment for us as to whether anything better than bewilderment can come of it. At present it seems to me that to rest any fundamental part of religion on such a basis is a melancholy misguidance of men's minds from the true sources of high and pure emotion (iii. 161).

The period of George Eliot's productions was from 1856, the date of her first stories, down to 1876, when she wrote, not under her brightest star, her last novel of *Daniel Deronda*. During this time the great literary influences of the epoch immediately preceding had not indeed fallen silent, but the most fruitful seed had been sown. Carlyle's *Sartor* (1833-1834), and his *Miscellaneous Essays* (collected, 1839), were in all hands; but he had fallen into the terrible slough of his Prussian history (1858-1865), and the last word of his evangel had gone forth to all whom it

concerned. *In Memoriam*, whose noble music and deep-browed thought awoke such new and wide response in men's hearts, was published in 1850. The second volume of *Modern Painters*, of which I have heard George Eliot say, as of *In Memoriam* too, that she owed much and very much to it, belongs to an earlier date still (1846), and when it appeared, though George Eliot was born in the same year as its author, she was still translating Strauss at Coventry. Mr. Browning, for whose genius she had such admiration, and who was always so good a friend, did indeed produce during this period some work which the adepts find as full of power and beauty as any that ever came from his pen. But Mr. Browning's genius has moved rather apart from the general currents of his time, creating character and working out motives from within, undisturbed by transient shadows from the passing questions and answers of the day.

The romantic movement was then upon its fall. The great Oxford movement, which besides its purely ecclesiastical effects, had linked English religion once more to human history, and which was itself one of the unexpected outcomes of the romantic movement, had spent its original force, and no longer interested the stronger minds among the rising generation. The hour had sounded for the scientific movement. In 1859 was published the *Origin of Species*, undoubtedly the most far-reaching agency of the time, supported as it was by a volume of new knowledge which came pouring in from many sides. The same

period saw the important speculations of Mr. Spencer, whose influence on George Eliot had from their first acquaintance been of a very decisive kind. Two years after the *Origin of Species* came Maine's *Ancient Law*, and that was followed by the accumulations of Mr. Tylor and others, exhibiting order and fixed correlation among great sets of facts which had hitherto lain in that cheerful chaos of general knowledge which has been called general ignorance. The excitement was immense. Evolution, development, heredity, adaptation, variety, survival, natural selection, were so many patent pass-keys that were to open every chamber.

George Eliot's novels, as they were the imaginative application of this great influx of new ideas, so they fitted in with the moods which those ideas had called up. 'My function,' she said (iii. 330), 'is that of the æsthetic, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge.' Her influence in this direction over serious and impressionable minds was great indeed. The spirit of her art exactly harmonised with the new thoughts that were shaking the world of her contemporaries. Other artists had drawn their pictures with a strong ethical background, but she gave a finer colour and a more spacious air to her ethics by showing the individual passions and emotions of her

characters, their adventures and their fortunes, as evolving themselves from long series of antecedent causes, and bound up with many widely operating forces and distant events. Here, too, we find ourselves in the full stream of evolution, heredity, survival, and fixed inexorable law.

This scientific quality of her work may be considered to have stood in the way of her own aim. That the nobler emotions roused by her writings tend to 'make mankind desire the social right' is not to be doubted; that we are not sure that she imparts peculiar energy to the desire. What she kindles is not a very strenuous, aggressive, and operative desire. The sense of the iron limitations that are set to improvement in present and future by inexorable forces of the past, is stronger in her than any intrepid resolution to press on to whatever improvement may chance to be within reach if we only make the attempt. In energy, in inspiration, in the kindling of living faith in social effort, George Sand, not to speak of Mazzini, takes a far higher place.

It was certainly not the business of an artist to form judgments in the sphere of practical politics, but George Eliot was far too humane a nature not to be deeply moved by momentous events as they passed. Yet her observations, at any rate after 1848, seldom show that energy of sympathy of which we have been speaking, and these observations illustrate our point. We can hardly think that anything was ever said about the great civil war in America,

so curiously far-fetched as the following reflection:—'My best consolation is that an example on so tremendous a scale of the need for the education of mankind through the affections and sentiments, as a basis for true development, will have a strong influence on all thinkers, and be a check to the arid narrow antagonism which in some quarters is held to be the only form of liberal thought' (ii. 335).

In 1848, as we have said, she felt the hopes of the hour in all their fulness. To a friend she writes (i. 179):—'You and Carlyle (have you seen his article in last week's *Examiner*?) are the only two people who feel just as I would have them—who can glory in what is actually great and beautiful without putting forth any cold reservations and incredulities to save their credit for wisdom. I am all the more delighted with your enthusiasm because I didn't expect it. I feared that you lacked revolutionary ardour. But no—you are just as *sans-culottish* and rash as I would have you. You are not one of those sages whose reason keeps so tight a rein on their emotions that they are too constantly occupied in calculating consequences to rejoice in any great manifestation of the forces that underlie our everyday existence.

'I thought we had fallen on such evil days that we were to see no really great movement—that ours was what St. Simon calls a purely critical epoch, not at all an organic one; but I begin to be glad of my date. I would consent, however, to have a year clipt

off my life for the sake of witnessing such a scene as that of the men of the barricades bowing to the image of Christ, 'who first taught fraternity to men.' One trembles to look into every fresh newspaper lest there should be something to mar the picture; but hitherto even the scoffing newspaper critics have been compelled into a tone of genuine respect for the French people and the Provisional Government. Lamartine can act a poem if he cannot write one of the very first order. I hope that beautiful face given to him in the pictorial newspaper is really his: it is worthy of an aureole. I have little patience with people who can find time to pity Louis Philippe and his moustachioed sons. Certainly our decayed monarchs should be pensioned off: we should have an hospital for them, or a sort of zoological garden, where these worn-out humbugs may be preserved. It is but justice that we should keep them, since we have spoiled them for any honest trade. Let them sit on soft cushions, and have their dinner regularly, but, for heaven's sake, preserve me from sentimentalising over a pampered old man when the earth has its millions of unfed souls and bodies. Surely he is not so Ahab-like as to wish that the revolution had been deferred till his son's days: and I think the shades of the Stuarts would have some reason to complain if the Bourbons, who are so little better than they, had been allowed to reign much longer.'

The hopes of '48 were not very accurately fulfilled, and in George Eliot they never came to life

again. Yet in social things we may be sure that undying hope is the secret of vision.

There is a passage in Coleridge's *Friend* which seems to represent the outcome of George Eliot's teaching on most, and not the worst, of her readers: —'The tangle of delusions,' says Coleridge, 'which stifled and distorted the growing tree of our well-being has been torn away; the parasite weeds that fed on its very roots have been plucked up with a salutary violence. To us there remain only quiet duties, the constant care, the gradual improvement, the cautious and unhazardous labours of the industrious though contented gardener—to prune, to strengthen, to engraft, and one by one to remove from its leaves and fresh shoots the slug and the caterpillar.' Coleridge goes farther than George Eliot, when he adds the exhortation—'Far be it from us to undervalue with light and senseless detraction the conscientious hardihood of our predecessors, or even to condemn in them that vehemence to which the blessings it won for us leave us now neither temptation nor pretext.'

George Eliot disliked vehemence more and more as her work advanced. The word 'crudity,' so frequently on her lips, stood for all that was objectionable and distasteful. The conservatism of an artistic moral nature was shocked by the seeming peril to which priceless moral elements of human character were exposed by the energumens of progress. Their impatient hopes for the present appeared to her

rather unscientific; their disregard of the past very irreverent and impious. Mill had the same feeling when he disgusted his father by standing up for Wordsworth, on the ground that Wordsworth was helping to keep alive in human nature elements which utilitarians and innovators would need when their present and particular work was done. Mill, being free from the exaltations that make the artist, kept a truer balance. His famous pair of essays on Bentham and Coleridge were published (for the first time, so far as our generation was concerned) in the same year as *Adam Bede*, and I can vividly remember how the 'Coleridge' first awoke in many of us, who were then youths at Oxford, that sense of truth having many mansions, and that desire and power of sympathy with the past, with the positive bases of the social fabric, and with the value of Permanence in States, which form the reputable side of all conservatisms. This sentiment and conviction never took richer or more mature form than in the best work of George Eliot, and her stories lighted up with a fervid glow the truths that minds of another type had just brought to the surface. It was this that made her a great moral force at that epoch, especially for all who were capable by intellectual training of standing at her point of view. We even, as I have said, tried hard to love her poetry, but the effort has ended less in love than in a very distant homage to the majestic in intention and the sonorous in execution. In fiction, too. as the years go by, we begin to crave more fancy,

illusion, enchantment, than the quality of her genius allowed. But the loftiness of her character is abiding, and it passes nobly through the ordeal of an honest biography. 'For the lessons,' says the fine critic already quoted, 'most imperatively needed by the mass of men, the lessons of deliberate kindness, of careful truth, of unwavering endeavour,—for these plain themes one could not ask a more convincing teacher than she whom we are commemorating now. Everything in her aspect and presence was in keeping with the bent of her soul. The deeply-lined face, the too marked and massive features, were united with an air of delicate refinement, which in one way was the more impressive because it seemed to proceed so entirely from within. Nay, the inward beauty would sometimes quite transform the external harshness; there would be moments when the thin hands that entwined themselves in their eagerness, the earnest figure that bowed forward to speak and hear, the deep gaze moving from one face to another with a grave appeal,—all these seemed the transparent symbols that showed the presence of a wise, benignant soul.' As a wise, benignant soul George Eliot will still remain for all right-judging men and women.

ON PATTISON'S MEMOIRS.[1]

To reckon the subject of this volume among leading minds who have stamped a deep influence on our generation, is not possible even to the friendliest partiality. That was not his position, and nobody could be less likely than he would himself have been to claim it. Pattison started no new problem. His name is associated with no fertile speculation, and with no work of the first degree of importance. Nor was he any more intended for a practical leader than for an intellectual discoverer. He did not belong to the class of authoritative men who are born to give decisions from the chair. Measured by any standard commensurate to his remarkable faculties, Pattison's life would be generally regarded as pale, negative, and ineffectual. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that he had a certain singular quality about him that made his society more interesting, more piquant, and more sapid than that of many men of a far wider importance and more commanding achievement.

Critics have spoken of his learning, but the

[1] *Memoirs.* By Mark Pattison, late Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. London, 1885.

description is only relatively accurate. Of him, in this respect, we may say, what he said of Erasmus. 'Erasmus, though justly styled by Muretus, *eruditus sane vir ac multæ lectionis*, was not a learned man in the special sense of the word—not an *érudit*. He was the man of letters. He did not make a study a part of antiquity for its own sake, but used it as an instrument of culture.' The result of culture in Pattison's actual life was not by any means ideal. For instance, he was head of a college for nearly a quarter of a century, and except as a decorative figure-head with a high literary reputation, he did little more to advance the working interests of his college during these five-and-twenty years than if he had been one of the venerable academic abuses of the worst days before reform. But his temperament, his reading, his recoil from Catholicism, combined with the strong reflective powers bestowed upon him by nature to produce a personality that was unlike other people, and infinitely more curious and salient than many who had a firmer grasp of the art of right living. In an age of effusion to be reserved, and in days of universal professions of sympathy to show a saturnine front, was to be an original. There was nobody in whose company one felt so much of the ineffable comfort of being quite safe against an attack of platitude. There was nobody on whom one might so surely count in the course of an hour's talk for some stroke of irony or pungent suggestion, or, at the worst, some significant, admonitory, and almost luminous manifestation of the great

ars tacendi. In spite of his copious and ordered knowledge, Pattison could hardly be said to have an affluent mind. He did not impart intellectual direction like Mill, nor morally impress himself like George Eliot. Even in pithy humour he was inferior to Bagehot, who was certainly one of the most remarkable of the secondary figures of our generation. But he made every one aware of contact with the reality of a living intelligence. It was evident that he had no designs upon you. He was not thinking of shaking a conviction, nor even of surprising admiration.

Everlasting neutrality, no doubt, may soon become a tiresome affectation. But we can afford to spare a few moments from our solid day to the Sage, if we are so lucky as to hit upon one; always provided that he be not of those whom La Bruyère has described as being made into sages by a certain natural mediocrity of mind. Whatever else may be said of Pattison, at least he was never mediocre, never vapid, trite, or common. Nor was he one of those false pretenders to the judicial mind, who 'mistake for sober sense And wise reserve, the plea of indolence.' On the contrary, his industry and spirit of laborious acquisition were his best credentials. He was invested to our young imaginations with the attraction of the literary explorer, who had 'voyaged through strange seas of thought alone,' had traversed broad continents of knowledge, had ransacked all the wisdom of printed books, and had by native courage and resource saved

himself from the engulfing waters of the great Movement.

The Memoirs of such a man may not be one of the monuments of literature. His little volume is not one of those romantic histories of the soul, from the Confessions of Augustine to the Confessions of Jean Jacques, by which men and women have been beguiled, enlightened, or inspired in their pilgrimage. It is not one of those idealised and highly embellished versions of an actual existence, with which such superb artists as George Sand, Quinet, and Renan, have delighted people of good literary taste. What the Rector has done is to deliver a tolerably plain and unvarnished tale of the advance of a peculiar type of mind along a path of its own, in days of intellectual storm and stress. It stirs no depths, it gives no powerful stimulus to the desire after either knowledge or virtue—in a word, it does not belong to the literature of edification. But it is an instructive account of a curious character, and contains valuable hints for more than one important chapter in the mental history of the century.

Mark Pattison, born in 1813, passed his youthful days at the rectory of Hauxwell, a village in Wensleydale, on the edge of the great uplands that stretch northwards towards Richmond and Barnard Castle, and form an outwork of the Pennine range and the backbone of northern England. The scene has been described in that biography of his Sister Dora, which he here so unceremoniously despatches as a romance.

'Hauxwell is a tiny village lying on the southern slope of a hill, from whence an extensive view of the moors and Wensleydale is obtained. It contains between two and three hundred inhabitants. The rectory is a pretty little dwelling, some half-mile from the church, which is a fine old building much shut in by trees. The whole village, even on a bright summer day, gives the traveller an impression of intense quiet, if not of dulness; but in winter, when the snow lies thickly for weeks together in the narrow lane, the only thoroughfare of the place; when the distant moors also look cold in their garment of white, and the large expanse of sky is covered with leaden-coloured clouds; when the very streams with which the country abounds are frozen into silence—then indeed may Hauxwell be called a lonely village.'

Pattison's father had been educated, badly enough, at Brasenose, but though his own literary instincts were of the slightest, he had social ambition enough to destine his son from the first to go to Oxford and become the fellow of a college. But nothing systematic was done towards making the desired consummation a certainty or even a probability. The youth read enormously, but he did not remember a tenth of what he read, nor did he even take in the sense of half of it as he went along. 'Books as books,' he says, 'were my delight, irrespective of their contents. I was already marked out for the life of a student, yet little that was in the books I read seemed to find its way into my mind.' He found time for much besides

reading. He delighted in riding, in shooting rooks in the Hall rookery, and in fishing for trout with clumsy tackle and worm. Passion for country sports was followed by passion for natural history in the ordinary shape of the boy's fancy for collecting insects and observing birds. He fell in with White's *Natural History of Selborne*, read it over and over again, and knew it by heart.

The love of birds, moths, butterflies, led on to the love of landscape; and altogether, in the course of the next six or seven years, grew and merged in a conscious and declared poetical sentiment and a devoted reading of the poets. I don't suppose the temperament was more inclined to æsthetic emotion in me than in other youths; but I was highly nervous and delicate, and having never been at school had not had sentiment and delicacy crushed out of me; also, living on the borderland of oak woods, with green lanes before me, and an expanse of wild heather extending into Northumberland behind, I was favourably placed for imbibing a knowledge by contrast of the physical features of England. My eye was formed to take in at a glance, and to receive delight from contemplating, as a whole, a hill and valley formation. Geology did not come in till ten years later to complete the cycle of thought, and to give that intellectual foundation which is required to make the testimony of the eye, roaming over an undulating surface, fruitful and satisfying. When I came in after years to read *The Prelude* I recognised, as if it were my own history which was being told, the steps by which the love of the country-boy for his hills and moors grew into poetical susceptibility for all imaginative presentations of beauty in every direction (pp. 34, 35).

Perhaps it may be added that this was a prepara-

tion for something more than merely poetical susceptibility. By substituting for the definite intellectual impressions of a systematic education, vague sensibilities as the foundation of character, this growth of sentiment, delicacy, and feeling for imaginative presentations of beauty, laid him peculiarly open to the religious influences that were awaiting him in days to come at Oxford.

In 1832 Pattison went up as a freshman to Oriel. His career as an undergraduate was externally distinguished by nothing uncommon, and promised nothing remarkable. He describes himself as shy, awkward, boorish, and mentally shapeless and inert. In 1833, however, he felt what he describes as the first stirrings of intellectual life within him. 'Hitherto I have had no mind, properly so-called, merely a boy's intelligence, receptive of anything I read or heard. I now awoke to the new idea of finding the reason of things; I began to suspect that I might have much to unlearn, as well as to learn, and that I must clear my mind of much current opinion which had lodged there. The principle of rationalism was born in me, and once born it was sure to grow, and to become the master idea of the whole process of self-education on which I was from this time forward embarked.' In other words, if he could have interpreted and classified his own intellectual type, he would have known that it was the Reflective. Reflection is a faculty that ripens slowly; the prelude of its maturity is often a dull and apparently numb-witted youth. Though

Pattison conceived his ideal at the age of twenty, he was five-and-forty before he finally and deliberately embraced it and shaped his life in conformity to it. The principle of rationalism, instead of growing, seemed for twelve whole years to grow under, and to be completely mastered by the antagonistic principles of authority, tradition, and transcendental faith.

The secret is to be found in what is the key to Pattison's whole existence, and of what he was more conscious at first than he seems to have been in later days. He was affected from first to last by a profound weakness of will and character. Few men of eminence have ever lived so destitute of nerve as Pattison was—of nerve for the ordinary demands of life, and of nerve for those large enterprises in literature for which by talent and attainment he was so admirably qualified. The stamp of moral *défaillance* was set upon his brow from the beginning. It was something deeper in its roots than the temporary self-consciousness of the adolescent that afflicted him in his early days at Oxford. The shy and stiff undergraduate is a familiar type enough, and Pattison is not the only youth of twenty of whom such an account as his own is true :—

> This inability to apprehend the reason of my social ill success had a discouraging consequence upon the growth of my character. I was so convinced that the fault was in me, and not in the others, that I lost anything like firm footing, and succumbed to or imitated any type, or set, with which I was brought in contact, esteeming it better than my own, of which I was too ashamed to stand

by it and assert it. Any rough, rude, self-confident fellow, who spoke out what he thought and felt, cowed me, and I yielded to him, and even assented to him, not with that yielding which gives way for peace's sake, secretly thinking itself right, but with a surrender of the convictions to his mode of thinking, as being better than my own, more like men, more like the world (p. 48).

This fatal trait remained unalterable to the very end, but as time went on things grew worse. Nobody knows what deliberate impotence means who has not chanced to sit upon a committee with Pattison. Whatever the business in hand might be, you might be sure that he started with the firm conviction that you could not possibly arrive at the journey's end. It seemed as if the one great principle of his life was that the Sons of Zeruiah must be too hard for us, and that nobody but a simpleton or a fanatic would expect anything else. 'With a manner,' he says of himself, 'which I believe suggested conceit, I had really a very low estimate of myself as compared with others. I could echo what Bishop Stanley says of himself in his journal: "My greatest obstacle to success in life has been a want of confidence in myself, under a doubt whether I really was possessed of talents on a par with those around me."' Very late in life, talking to Mr. Morison, he said in his pensive way, 'Yes, let us take our worst opinion of ourselves in our most depressed mood. Extract the cube root of that, and you will be getting near the common opinion of your merits.'

He describes another side of the same over-

spreading infirmity when he is explaining why it was always impossible for him ever to be anything but a Liberal. 'The restlessness of critical faculty,' he says, 'has done me good service when turned upon myself. *I have never enjoyed any self-satisfaction in anything I have ever done*, for I have inevitably made a mental comparison with how it might have been better done. The motto of one of my diaries, "Quicquid hic operis fiat pœnitet" may be said to be the motto of my life' (p. 254). A man who enters the battle on the back of a charger that has been hamstrung in this way, is predestined to defeat. A frequent access of dejection, self-abasement, distrust, often goes with a character that is energetic, persevering, effective, and reasonably happy. To men of strenuous temper it is no paradox to say that a fit of depression is often a form of repose. It was D'Alembert, one of the busiest of the workers of a busy century, who said this, or something to this effect—that low spirits are only a particular name for the mood in which we see our aims and acts for what they really are. Pattison's case was very different. With him, except for a very few short years, despair was a system and an unreasoned pessimism the most rooted assurance of his being. He tells a thoroughly characteristic story of himself in his days as an undergraduate. He was on the coach between Birmingham and Sheffield. Two men shared the front seat with him, and conversed during the whole of the journey about the things which he was yearning to know

and to learn. 'I tried once or twice to put in my oar, but it was a failure: I was too far below their level of knowledge; I relapsed into enchanted listening. I thought to myself, "There exists there such a world, but I am shut out of it, not by the accidents of college, but by my own unfitness to enter"' (p. 148). Mankind suffers much from brassy incompetency and over-complacency, but Pattison is only one of many examples how much more it may lose in a man who has ability, but no fight and no mastery in him. As we have all been told, in this world a man must be either anvil or hammer, and it always seemed as if Pattison deliberately chose to be anvil —not merely in the shape of a renunciation of the delusive pomps and vanities of life, but in the truly questionable sense of doubting both whether he could do anything, and whether he even owed anything to the world in which he found himself.

The earliest launch was a disappointment. He had set his heart upon a first class, but he had not gone to work in the right way. Instead of concentrating his attention on the task in hand, he could only in later days look back with amazement 'at the fatuity of his arrangements and the snail-like progress with which he seemed to be satisfied.' He was content if, on his final review of Thucydides, he got through twenty or thirty chapters a day, and he reread Sophocles 'at the lazy rate of a hundred and fifty lines a day, instead of going over the difficult places only, which might have been done in a week.'

'There must,' he says, 'have been idleness to boot, but it is difficult to draw the line between idleness and dawdling over work. I dawdled from a mixture of mental infirmity, bad habit, and the necessity of thoroughness if I was to understand, and not merely remember.' The dangerous delights of literary dispersion and dissipation attracted him. Among his books of recreation was Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. 'This I took in slowly, page by page, as if by an instinct; but here was a congenial subject, to which, when free, I would return, and where I would set up my habitation.'

It was probably a reminiscence of these vacations at Hauxwell that inspired the beautiful passage in his *Milton*, where he contrasts the frosty *Ode to the Nativity* with the *Allegro and Penseroso*. 'The two idylls,' he says, 'breathe the free air of spring and summer and of the fields round Horton. They are thoroughly naturalistic; the choicest expression our language has yet found of the fresh charm of country life, not as that life is lived by the peasant, but as it is felt by a young and lettered student, issuing at early dawn or at sunset from his chamber and his books. All such sights and sounds and smells are here blended in that ineffable combination which once or twice, perhaps, in our lives has saluted our young senses before their perceptions were blunted by alcohol, by lust, or ambition, or diluted by the social distractions of great cities' (Pattison's *Milton*, 24).

For the examination school no preparation could have been worse. It was no wonder that so uncalculating an adjustment of means and ends resulted in a second class (1836). The class was not merely a misfortune in itself, but threatened to be a bar to the fulfilment of his lifelong dream of a fellowship. He tried his fortunes at University, where he was beaten by Faber; and at Oriel, his own college, where he was beaten by the present Dean of St. Paul's. 'There was such a moral beauty about Church,' it was said by a man not peculiarly sensitive about moral beauty, 'that they could not help liking him.' Though Pattison had failed, Newman sent him word that there were some who thought that he had done the best. He made two more unsuccessful attempts, in one of them the triumphant competitor being Stanley, the famous Dean of a later day. At last, in November 1838, he was elected to a Yorkshire fellowship at Lincoln College. 'No moment in all my life,' he says, 'has ever been so sweet as that Friday morning, when Radford's servant came in to announce my election, and to claim his five shillings for doing so.' Yet if the curtain of fate could have been raised, his election to the Lincoln fellowship might have disclosed itself as the central misfortune of his life.

'All this while,' he says, 'I was rushing into the whirlpool of Tractarianism; was very much noticed by Newman—in fact fanaticism was laying its deadly grip around me.' He had come up from Yorkshire with what he calls his 'home Puritan religion almost

narrowed to two points—fear of God's wrath and faith in the doctrine of the Atonement.' He found Newman and his allies actively dissolving this hard creed by means of historical, philosophical, and religious elements which they summed up in the idea of the Church. This idea of the Church, as Pattison truly says, and as men so far removed from sympathy with dogma as J. S. Mill always admitted, 'was a widening of the horizon.' In another place (*Mind*, i. 83-88) the Rector shows the stages of speculation in Oxford during the present century. From 1800 or 1810 to 1830 the break-up of the old lethargy took the form of a vague intellectualism; free movement, but blind groping out of the mists of insular prejudice in which reaction against the French Revolution had wrapped us. Then came the second period from 1830 to 1845. Tractarianism was primarily a religious movement; it was a revival of the Church spirit which had been dormant since the expiry of Jacobitism at the accession of George III. But it rested on a conception, however imperfect, of universal history; and it even sought a basis for belief in a philosophic exposition of the principle of authority.

Pattison, like most of the superior minds then at Oxford, was not only attracted, but thoroughly overmastered by this great tide of thought. He worked at the Lives of the Saints, paid a visit to the cloisters at Littlemore, and was one of Newman's closest disciples, though he thinks it possible that Newman even then, with that curious instinct which so often

marks the religious soul, had a scent of his latent rationalism. A female cousin, who eventually went over to Rome, counted for something among the influences that drove him into 'frantic Puseyism.' When the great secession came in 1845 Pattison somehow held back and was saved for a further development. Though he appeared to all intents and purposes as much of a Catholic at heart as Newman or any of them, it was probably his constitutional incapacity for heroic and decisive courses that made him, according to the Oxford legend, miss the omnibus. The first notion of the Church had expanded itself beyond the limits of the Anglican Communion, and been transformed into the wider idea of the Catholic Church. This in time underwent a further expansion.

Now the idea of the Catholic Church is only a mode of conceiving the dealings of divine Providence with the whole race of mankind. Reflection on the history and condition of humanity, taken as a whole, gradually convinced me that this theory of the relation of all living beings to the Supreme Being was too narrow and inadequate. It makes an equal Providence, the Father of all, care only for a mere handful of species, leaving the rest (such is the theory) to the chances of eternal misery. If God interferes at all to procure the happiness of mankind, it must be on a far more comprehensive scale than by providing for them a Church of which far the majority of them will never hear. It was on this line of thought, the details of which I need not pursue, that I passed out of the Catholic phase, but slowly, and in many years, to that highest development when all religions appear in their historical light as efforts of the human spirit to come

to an understanding with that Unseen Power whose pressure it feels, but whose motives are a riddle. Thus *Catholicism dropped off* me as another husk which I had outgrown (pp. 327-328).

So a marked epoch came to its close, and this was one of the many forms in which the great Anglican impulse expended itself. While Newman and others sank their own individuality in religious devotion to authority and tradition, Pusey turned what had been discussion into controversy, and from a theologian became a powerful ecclesiastical manager. Others dropped their religious interests, and cultivated cynicism and letters. The railway mania, the political outbursts of 1848, utilitarian liberalism, all in turn swept over the Oxford field, and obliterated the old sanctuaries. Pattison went his own way alone. The time came when he looked back upon religion with some of the angry contempt with which George Eliot makes Bardo, the blind old humanist of the fifteenth century, speak of his son, who had left learning and liberal pursuits, 'that he might lash himself and howl at midnight with besotted friars—that he might go wandering on pilgrimages befitting men who knew no past older than the missal and the crucifix.'

It is a critical moment in life when middle age awakens a man from the illusions that have been crowning the earlier years with inward glory. Some are contemptuously willing to let the vision and the dream pass into easy oblivion, while they hasten to make up for lost time in close pursuit of the main

chance. Others can forgive anything sooner than their own exploded ideal, and the ghost of their dead enthusiasm haunts them with an embittering presence. Pattison drops a good many expressions about his Anglo-Catholic days that betray something like vindictiveness—which is certainly not philosophical, whatever else it was. But his intellectual faculties were too strong to let him feed on the poison of a reactionary antipathy to a deserted faith. Puseyism, as he says, dropped away from him for lack of nutrition of the religious brain,—which perhaps at the best was more like an artificial limb than a natural organ in a man of Pattison's constitution. For some five years he was inspired by a new and more genuine enthusiasm—for forming and influencing the minds of the young. He found that he was the possessor of what, for lack of a better name, he calls a magnetic power in dealing with the students, and his moral ascendency enabled him to make Lincoln the best managed college in Oxford.

From 1848 to 1851 he describes his absorption in the work of the college as complete. It excluded all other thoughts. In November that incident occurred which he calls the catastrophe of his life. The headship of the college fell vacant, and for several weeks he was led to believe that this valuable prize was within his grasp. At first the invincible diffidence of his nature made it hard for him to realise that exaltation so splendid was possible. But the prospect once opened, fastened with a fatally violent hold upon his

imagination. The fellows of Lincoln College, who were the electors, were at that time a terribly degraded body. The majority of them were no more capable of caring for literature, knowledge, education, books, or learning than Squire Western or Commodore Trunnion. One of them, says Pattison, had been reduced by thirty years of the Lincoln common-room to a torpor almost childish. Another was 'a wretched *crétin* of the name of Gibbs, who was always glad to come and booze at the college port a week or two when his vote was wanted in support of college abuses.' The description of a third, who still survives, is veiled by editorial charity behind significant asterisks. That Pattison should be popular with such a gang was impossible. Such an Alceste was a standing nuisance and reproach to the rustic Acastes and Clitandres of the Lincoln bursary. They might have tolerated his intellect and overlooked his industry, if his intellect and his industry had not spoiled his sociability. But irony and the *ars tacendi* are not favourite ingredients in the boon companion. Pattison never stayed in the common-room later than eight in the evening, and a man was no better than a skeleton at a feast who left good fellows for the sake of going over an essay with a pupil, instead of taking a hand at whist or helping them through another bottle.

We need not follow the details of the story. Pattison has told them over again, with a minuteness and a sourness that show how the shabby business rankled in his soul to the very last. It was no battle

of giants, like the immortal Thirty Years' War between Bentley and the Fellows of Trinity. The election at Lincoln College, which was a scandal in the university for many a long day after, was simply a tissue of paltry machinations, in which weakness, cunning, spite, and a fair spice of downright lying showed that a learned society, even of clergymen, may seethe and boil with the passions of the very refuse of humanity. Intricate and unclean intrigues ended, by a curious turn of the wheel, in the election of a grotesque divine, whom Pattison, with an energy of phrase that recalls the amenities of ecclesiastical controversy in the sixteenth century, roundly designates in so many words as a satyr, a ruffian, and a wild beast. The poor man was certainly illiterate and boorish to a degree that was a standing marvel to all ingenuous youths who came up to Lincoln College between 1850 and 1860. His manners, bearing, and accomplishments were more fitted for the porter of a workhouse than for the head of a college. But he served the turn by keeping out Pattison's rival, and whatever discredit he brought upon the society must be shared by those who, with Pattison at their head, brought him in against a better man. All this unsavoury story might as well have been left where it was.

The reaction was incredibly severe. There has been nothing equal to it since the days of the Psalmist were consumed like smoke, and his heart was withered like grass. 'My mental forces,' says Pattison, 'were paralysed by the shock; a blank, dumb despair filled

me; a chronic heartache took possession of me, perceptible even through sleep. As consciousness gradually returned in the morning, it was only to bring with it a livelier sense of the cruelty of the situation into which I had been brought.' He lay in bed until ten o'clock every morning to prolong the semi-oblivion of sleep. Work was impossible. If he read, it was without any object beyond semi-forgetfulness. He was too much benumbed and stupefied to calculate the future. He went through the forms of lecturing, but the life and spirit were gone. Teaching became as odious to him as it had once been delightful. His Satan, as he calls the most active of the enemies who had thus ruined his paradise, planned new operations against him, by trying, on the grounds of some neglected formality, to oust him from his fellowship. 'Here,' cries Pattison, 'was a new abyss opened beneath my feet! My bare livelihood, for I had nothing except my fellowship to live upon, was threatened; it seemed not unlikely that I should be turned into the streets to starve. Visitatorial law, what it might contain! It loomed before me like an Indian jungle, out of which might issue venomous reptiles, man-eating tigers, for my destruction.'

This is not the language of half-humorous exaggeration, but a literal account of a mind as much overthrown from its true balance as is disclosed in the most morbid page of Rousseau's *Confessions*. For months and months after the burden of 'dull, insensible wretchedness,' 'bitter heartache,' weighed

upon him with unabated oppression. More than a year after the catastrophe the sombre entries still figure in his diary:—'Very weary and wretched both yesterday and to-day: all the savour of life is departed:'—'Very wretched all yesterday and to-day: dull, gloomy, blank; sleep itself is turned to sorrow.' Nearly two whole years after the same clouds still blacken the sky. 'I have nothing to which I look forward with any satisfaction: no prospects; my life seems to have come to an end, my strength gone, my energies paralysed, and all my hopes dispersed.'

It is true that frustrated ambition was not the only key to this frightfully abject abasement. We may readily believe him when he says that the personal disappointment was a minor ingredient in the total of mental suffering that he was now undergoing. His whole heart and pride had in the last few years been invested in the success of the college; it was the thing on which he had set all his affections; in a fortnight the foundation of his work was broken up; and the wretched and deteriorated condition of the undergraduates became as poison in his daily cup. That may all be true enough. Still, whatever elements of a generous public spirit sharply baffled may have entered into this extraordinary moral breakdown, it must be pronounced a painfully unmanly and unedifying exhibition. It says a great deal for the Rector's honesty and sincerity in these pages, that he should not have shrunk from giving so faithful and prominent an account of a weakness and a self-abandonment

which he knew well enough that the world will only excuse in two circumstances. The world forgives almost anything to a man in the crisis of a sore spiritual wrestle for faith and vision and an Everlasting Yea; and almost anything to one prostrated by the shock of an irreparable personal bereavement. But that anybody with character of common healthiness should founder and make shipwreck of his life because two or three unclean creatures had played him a trick after their kind, is as incredible as that a three-decker should go down in a street puddle.

It will not do to say that lack of fortitude is a mark of the man of letters. To measure Pattison's astounding collapse, we have a right to recall Johnson, Scott, Carlyle, and a host of smaller men, whom no vexations, chagrins, and perversities of fate could daunt from fighting the battle out. Pattison was thirty-eight when he missed the headship of his college. Diderot was about the same age when the torments against which he had struggled for the best part of twenty arduous years in his gigantic task seemed to reach the very climax of distraction. 'My dear master,' he wrote to Voltaire, in words which it is a refreshment under the circumstances to recall and to transcribe, 'my dear master, I am over forty. I am tired out with tricks and shufflings. I cry from morning till night for rest, rest; and scarcely a day passes when I am not tempted to go and live in obscurity and die in peace in the depths of my old country. Be useful to men! Is it certain that one

does more than amuse them, and that there is much difference between the philosopher and the flute-player? They listen to one and the other with pleasure or with disdain, and they remain just what they were. But there is more spleen than sense in all this, I know—and back I go to the Encyclopædia.' And back he went—that is the great point—with courage unabated and indomitable, labouring with sword in one hand and trowel in the other, until he had set the last stone on his enormous fabric.

Several years went by before Pattison's mind recovered spring and equilibrium, and the unstrung nerves were restored to energy. Fishing, the open air, solitude, scenery, slowly repaired the moral ravages of the college election. The fly rod 'was precisely the resource of which my wounded nature stood in need.' About the middle of April, after long and anxious preparation of rods and tackle, with a box of books and a store of tobacco, he used to set out for the north. He fished the streams of Uredale and Swaledale; thence he pushed on to the Eden and the waters of the Border, to Perthshire, to Loch Maree, Gairloch, Skye, and the far north. When September came, he set off for rambles in Germany. He travelled on foot, delighting in the discovery of nooks and corners that were not mentioned in the guidebooks. Then he would return to his rooms in college, and live among his books. To the undergraduates of that day he was a solemn and mysterious figure. He spoke to no one, saluted no one, and

kept his eyes steadily fixed on infinite space. He dined at the high table, but uttered no word. He never played the part of host, nor did he ever seem to be a guest. He read the service in chapel when his turn came; his voice had a creaking and impassive tone, and his pace was too deliberate to please young men with a morning appetite. As he says here, he was a complete stranger in the college. We looked upon him with the awe proper to one who was supposed to combine boundless erudition with an impenetrable misanthropy. In reading the fourth book of the Ethics, we regarded the description of the High-souled Man, with his slow movements, his deep tones, his deliberate speech, his irony, his contempt for human things, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of that most singular personage, as the model of the inscrutable sage in the rooms under the clock. Pattison was understood to be the Megalopsuchos in the flesh. It would have been better for him if he could have realised the truth of the healthy maxim that nobody is ever either so happy or so unhappy as he thinks. He would have been wiser if he could have seen the force in the monition of Goethe:—

Willst du dir ein hübsch Leben zimmern,
Must ums Vergangne dich nicht bekümmern,
Und wäre dir auch was verloren,
Musst immer thun wie neu geboren;
Was jeder Tag will, sollst du fragen,
Was jeder Tag will, wird er sagen;
Musst dich an eignem Thun ergetzen,
Was andre thun, das wirst du schätzen:

Besonders keinen Menschen hassen,
Und das Uebrige Gott überlassen.

(*Zahme Xenien*, iv.)

Wouldst fashion for thyself a seemly life?—
Then fret not over what is past and gone;
And spite of all thou mayst have lost behind
Yet act as if thy life were just begun:
What each day wills, enough for thee to know,
What each day wills, the day itself will tell;
Do thine own task, and be therewith content,
What others do, that shalt thou fairly judge;
Be sure that thou no brother mortal hate.
And all besides leave to the master Power.

At length 'the years of defeat and despair,' as he calls them, came to an end, though 'the mental and moral deterioration' that belonged to them left heavy traces to the very close of his life. He took a lively interest in the discussions that were stirred by the famous University Commission, and contributed ideas to the subject of academic reform on more sides than one. But such matters he found desultory and unsatisfying; he was in a state of famine; his mind was suffering, not growing; he was becoming brooding, melancholy, taciturn, and finally pessimist (pp. 306, 307). Pattison was five-and-forty before he reached the conception of what became his final ideal, as it had been in a slightly different shape his first and earliest. He had always been a voracious reader. When 'the flood of the Tractarian infatuation broke over him, he naturally concentrated his studies on the Fathers and on Church History. That phase, in his own term, took eight years out of his life. Then for five

years more he was absorbed in teaching and forming the young mind. The catastrophe came, and for five or six years after that he still remained far below 'the pure and unselfish conception of the life of the true student, which dawned upon him afterwards, and which Goethe, it seems, already possessed at thirty.' Up to this time—the year 1857, or a little later—his aims and thoughts had been, in his own violent phrase, polluted and disfigured by literary ambition. He had felt the desire to be before the world as a writer, and had hitherto shared 'the vulgar fallacy that a literary life meant a life devoted to the making of books.' 'It cost me years more of extrication of thought before I rose to *the conception that the highest life is the art to live*, and that both men, women, and books are equally essential ingredients of such a life' (p. 310).

We may notice in passing, what any one will see for himself, that in contrasting his new conception so triumphantly with the vulgar fallacy from which he had shaken himself free, the Rector went very near to begging the question. When Carlyle, in the strength of his reaction against morbid introspective Byronism, cried aloud to all men in their several vocation, '*Produce, produce; be it but the infinitesimallest product, produce*,' he meant to include production as an element inside the art of living, and an indispensable part and parcel of it. The making of books may or may not belong to the art of living. It depends upon the faculty and gift of the individual. It would have been more philosophical if, instead of ranking

the life of study for its own sake above the life of composition and the preparation for composition, Pattison had been content with saying that some men have the impulse towards literary production, while in others the impulse is strongest for acquisition, and that he found out one day that nature had placed him in the latter and rarer class. It is no case of ethical or intellectual superiority, as he fondly supposed, but only diversity of gift.

We must turn to the volume on Casaubon for a fuller interpretation of the oracle. 'The scholar,' says the author, 'is greater than his books. The result of his labours is not so many thousand pages in folio, but himself. . . . Learning is a peculiar compound of memory, imagination, scientific habit, accurate observation, all concentrated, through a prolonged period, on the analysis of the remains of literature. The result of this sustained mental endeavour is not a book, but a man. It cannot be embodied in print, it consists in the living word. True learning does not consist in the possession of a stock of facts—the merit of a dictionary—but in the discerning spirit, a power of appreciation, *judicium* as it was called in the sixteenth century—which is the result of the possession of a stock of facts.'

The great object, then, is to bring the mind into such a condition of training and cultivation that it shall be a perfect mirror of past times, and of the present, so far as the incompleteness of the present will permit, 'in true outline and proportion.' Momm-

sen, Grote, Droysen, fall short of the ideal, because they drugged ancient history with modern politics. The Jesuit learning of the sixteenth century was sham learning, because it was tainted with the interested motives of Church patriotism. To search antiquity with polemical objects in view, is destructive of 'that equilibrium of the reason, the imagination, and the taste, that even temper of philosophical calm, that singleness of purpose,' which were all required for Pattison's ideal scholar. The active man has his uses, he sometimes, but never very cheerfully, admits. Those who at the opening of the seventeenth century fought in literature, in the council-chamber, in the field, against the Church revival of their day, may be counted among worthies and benefactors. 'But for all this, it remains true, that in the intellectual sphere grasp and mastery are incompatible with the exigencies of a struggle.'

The reader will hardly retain gravity of feature before the self-indulgent, self-deceiving sophistication of a canon, which actually excludes from grasp and mastery in the intellectual sphere Dante, Milton, and Burke. Pattison repeats in his closing pages his lamentable refrain that the author of *Paradise Lost* should have forsaken poetry for more than twenty years 'for a noisy pamphlet brawl, and the unworthy drudgery of Secretary to the Council Board' (p. 332). He had said the same thing in twenty places in his book on Milton. He transcribes unmoved the great poet's account of his own state of mind, after the

physicians had warned him that if he persisted in using his remaining eye for his pamphlet, he would lose that too. 'The choice lay before me,' says Milton, 'between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight: in such a case I could not listen to the physician, not if Æsculapius himself had spoken from his sanctuary. I could not but obey that inward monitor, I knew not what, that spake to me from heaven. I considered with myself that many had purchased less good with worse ill, as they who give their lives to reap only glory, and I therefore concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render.' And so he wrote the *Second Defence*, and yet lived long enough, and preserved sublimity of imagination enough, to write the *Paradise Lost* as well. Mr. Goldwin Smith goes nearer the mark than the Rector when he insists that 'the tension and elevation which Milton's nature had undergone in the mighty struggle, together with the heroic dedication of his faculties to the most serious objects, must have had not a little to do both with the final choice of his subject and with the tone of his poem. "The great Puritan epic" could hardly have been written by any one but a militant Puritan' (*Lectures and Essays*, p. 324). In the last page of his *Memoirs*, Pattison taxes the poet with being carried away by the aims of 'a party whose aims he idealised.' As if the highest fruitfulness of intellect were ever reached without this generous

faculty of idealisation, which Pattison, here and always, viewed with such icy coldness. Napoleon used to say that what was most fatal to a general was a knack of combining objects into pictures. A good officer, he said, never makes pictures; he sees objects, as through a field-glass, exactly as they are. In the art of war let us take Napoleon's word for this; but in 'the art to live' a man who dreads to idealise aims or to make pictures, who can think of nothing finer than being what Aristotle calls *αὐθέκαστος*, or taking everything literally for what it is, will sooner or later find his faculties benumbed and his work narrowed to something for which nobody but himself will care, and for which he will not himself always care with any sincerity or depth of interest.

Let us take another illustration of the false exclusiveness of the definition, in which Pattison erected a peculiar constitutional idiosyncrasy into a complete and final law for the life literary. He used to contend that in many respects the most admirable literary figure of the eighteenth century was the poet Gray. Gray, he would say, never thought that devotion to letters meant the making of books. He gave himself up for the most part to ceaseless observation and acquisition. By travelling, reading, noting, with a patient industry that would not allow itself to be diverted or perturbed, he sought and gained the discerning spirit and the power of appreciation which make not a book but a man. He annotated the volumes that he read with judgment; he kept bo-

tanical calendars and thermometrical registers; he had a lively curiosity all round; and, in Gray's own words, he deemed it a sufficient object of his studies to know, wherever he was, what lay within reach that was worth seeing—whether building, ruin, park, garden, prospect, picture, or monument—to whom it had ever belonged, and what had been the characteristic and taste of different ages. 'Turn author,' said Gray, 'and straightway you expose yourself to pit, boxes, and gallery: any coxcomb in the world may come in and hiss if he pleases; ay, and what is almost as bad, clap too, and you cannot hinder him.'

Nobody will be inclined to quarrel with Gray's way of passing his life, and the poet who had produced so exquisite a masterpiece as the Elegy had a fair right to spend the rest of his days as he pleased. But the temptations to confound a finicking dilettantism with the 'art to live' are so strong, that it is worth while to correct the Rector's admiration for Gray by looking on another picture — one of Gray's most famous contemporaries, who in variety of interest and breadth of acquired knowledge was certainly not inferior to him, but enormously his superior. Lessing died when he was fifty-two (1729-1781); his life was two years shorter than Gray's (1716-1771), and nearly twenty years shorter than Pattison's (1813-1884). The Rector would have been the last man to deny that the author of *Laokoön* and the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* abounded in the discerning spirit and the power of appreciation. Yet Lessing was one

of the most incessantly productive minds of his age. In art, in religion, in literature, in the drama, in the whole field of criticism, he launched ideas of sovereign importance, both for his own and following times, and, in *Nathan the Wise*, the truest and best mind of the eighteenth century found its gravest and noblest voice. Well might George Eliot at the Berlin theatre feel her heart swelling and the tears coming into her eyes as she 'listened to the noble words of dear Lessing, whose great spirit lives immortally in this crowning work of his' (*Life*, i. 364). Yet so far were 'grasp and mastery' from being incompatible with the exigencies of a struggle, that the varied, supple, and splendid powers of Lessing were exercised from first to last in an atmosphere of controversy. Instead of delicately nursing the theoretic life in the luxury of the academic cloister, he was forced to work like a slave upon the most uncongenial tasks for a very modest share of daily bread. 'I only wished to have things like other men,' he said in a phrase of pathetic simplicity, at the end of his few short months of wedded happiness; 'I have had but sorry success.' Harassed by small persecutions, beset by paltry debts, passing months in loneliness and in indigence, he was yet so possessed, not indeed by the winged dæmon of poetic creation, but by the irrepressible impulse and energy of production, that the power of his intellect triumphed over every obstacle, and made him one of the greatest forces in the wide history of European literature.

Our whole heart goes out to a man who thus, in spite alike of his own impetuous stumbles and the blind buffets of unrelenting fate, yet persevered to the last in laborious, honest, spontaneous, and almost artless fidelity to the use of his talent, and after each repulse only came on the more eagerly to 'live and act and serve the future hours.' It was Lessing and not Rousseau whom Carlyle ought to have taken for his type of the Hero as Man of Letters.

The present writer will not be suspected of the presumption of hinting or implying that Pattison himself was a *dilettante*, or anything like one. There never was a more impertinent blunder than when people professed to identify the shrewdest and most widely competent critic of his day with the Mr. Casaubon of the novel, and his absurd Key to all Mythologies. The Rector's standard of equipment was the highest of our time. 'A critic's education,' he said, 'is not complete till he has in his mind a conception of the successive phases of thought and feeling from the beginning of letters. Though he need not read every book, he must have surveyed literature in its totality. Partial knowledge of literature is no knowledge' (*Fortnightly Review*, Nov. 1877, p. 670). For a man to know his way about in the world of printed books, to find the key to knowledge, to learn the map of literature, 'requires a long apprenticeship. This is a point few men can hope to reach much before the age of forty' (*Milton*, 110).

There was no dilettantism here. And one must say much more than that. Many of those in whom the love of knowledge is liveliest omit from their curiosity that part of knowledge which is, to say the least of it, as interesting as all the rest—insight, namely, into the motives, character, conduct, doctrines, fortunes of the individual man. It was not so with Pattison. He was essentially a bookman, but of that high type—the only type that is worthy of a spark of our admiration — which explores through books the voyages of the human reason, the shifting impulses of the human heart, the chequered fortunes of great human conceptions. Pattison knew that he is very poorly equipped for the art of criticism who has not trained himself in the observant analysis of character, and has not realised that the writer who seeks to give richness, body, and flavour to his work must not linger exclusively among texts or abstract ideas or general movements or literary effects, but must tell us something about the moral and intellectual configuration of those with whom he deals. I had transcribed, for an example, his account of Erasmus, but the article is growing long, and the reader may find it for himself in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (viii. 515 *a*).

Though nobody was ever much less of a man of the world in one sense, yet Pattison's mind was always in the world. In company he often looked as if he were thinking of the futility of dinner-party dialectics, where all goes too fast for truth, where people miss

one another's points and their own, where nobody convinces or is convinced, and where there is much surface excitement with little real stimulation. That so shrewd a man should have seen so obvious a fact as all this was certain. But he knew that the world is the real thing, that the proper study of mankind is man, and that if books must be counted more instructive and nourishing than affairs, as he thought them to be, it is still only because they are the most complete record of what is permanent, elevated, and eternal in the mind and act of man. Study with him did not mean the compilation of careful abstracts of books, nor did it even mean the historic filiation of thoughts and beliefs. It was the building up before the mind's eye of definite conceptions as to what manner of men had been bred by the diversified agencies of human history, and how given thoughts had shaped the progress of the race. This is what, among other things, led him to spend so much time (p. 116) on the circle of Pope and Addison and

We have let fall a phrase about the progress of the race, but it hardly had a place in Pattison's own vocabulary. 'While the advances,' he said, 'made by objective science and its industrial applications are palpable and undeniable everywhere around us, it is a matter of doubt and dispute if our social and moral advance towards happiness and virtue has been great or any.' The selfishness of mankind might seem to be a constant quantity, neither much abated

nor much increased since history began. Italy and France are in most material points not more civilised than they were in the second century of our era. The reign of law and justice has no doubt extended into the reign of hyperborean ice and over Sarmatian plains: but then Spain has relapsed into a double barbarism by engrafting Catholic superstition upon Iberian ferocity. If we look Eastward, we see a horde of barbarians in occupation of the garden of the Old World, not as settlers, but as destroyers (*Age of Reason*, in *Fortnightly Review*, March 1877, 357-361).

The same prepossessions led him to think that all the true things had been said, and one could do no better than hunt them up again for new uses. Our business was, like Old Mortality, to clear out and cut afresh inscriptions that had been made illegible by time and storm. At least this delivered him from the senseless vanity of originality and personal appropriation. We feel sure that if he found that a thought which he had believed to be new had been expressed in literature before, he would have been pleased and not mortified. No reflection of his own could give him half as much satisfaction as an apt citation from some one else. He once complained of the writer of the article on Comte in the *Encyclopædia* for speaking with too much deference as to Comte's personality. 'That overweening French vanity and egotism not only overshadows great gifts, but impoverishes the character which nourished such a sentiment. It is

not one of the weaknesses which we overlook in great men, and which are to go for nothing.' Of overweening egotism Pattison himself at any rate had none. This was partly due to his theory of history, and partly, too, no doubt, to his inborn discouragement of spirit. He always professed to be greatly relieved when an editor assured him that his work was of the quality that might have been expected from him. 'Having lived to be sixty-three,' he wrote on one of these occasions, 'without finding out why the public embrace or reject what is written for their benefit, I presume I shall now never make the discovery.' And this was perfectly sincere.

The first draft of his *Life of Milton* was found to exceed the utmost limits of what was possible by some thirty or forty pages. Without a single movement of importunity or complaint he cut off the excess, though it amounted to a considerable fraction of what he had done. 'In any case,' he said, 'it is all on Milton; there is no digression on public affairs, and much which might have gone in with advantage to the completeness of the story has been entirely passed over, *e.g.* history of his posthumous fame, Bentley's emendations, *et cetera*.' It almost seemed as if he had a private satisfaction in a literary mishap of this kind: it was an unexpected corroboration of his standing conclusion that this is the most stupid and perverse of all possible worlds.

'My one scheme,' he wrote to a friend in 1877, 'that of a history of the eighteenth century, having

been forestalled by Leslie Stephen, and the collections of years having been rendered useless, I am entirely out of gear, and cannot settle to anything.' His correspondent urged the Rector to consider and reconsider. It would be one of the most deplorable misfortunes in literature if he were thus to waste the mature fruit of the study of a lifetime. It was as unreasonable as if Raphael or Titian had refused to paint a Madonna simply because other people had painted Madonnas before them. Some subjects, no doubt, were treated once for all; if Southey had written his history of the Peninsular war after Napier, he would have done a silly thing, and his book would have been damned unread. But what reason was there why we should not have half a dozen books on English thought in the eighteenth century? Would not Grote have inflicted a heavy loss upon us if he had been frightened out of his plan by Thirlwall? And so forth, and so forth. But all such importunities were of no avail. 'I have pondered over your letter,' Pattison replied, 'but without being able to arrive at any resolution of any kind.' Of course one knew that in effect temperament had already cast the resolution for him in letters of iron before our eyes.

We are not aware whether any considerable work has been left behind. His first great scheme, as he tells us here (p. 319), was a history of learning from the Renaissance. Then he contracted his views to a history of the French school of Philology, beginning with Budæus and the Delphin classics. Finally, his

ambition was narrowed to fragments. The book on *Isaac Casaubon*, published ten years ago, is a definite and valuable literary product. But the great work would have been the vindication of Scaliger, for which he had been getting materials together for thirty years. Many portions, he says, were already written out in their definite form, and twelve months would have completed it. Alas, a man should not go on trusting until his seventieth year that there is still plenty of daylight. He contributed five biographies to the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The articles on Bentley, Erasmus, Grotius, More, and Macaulay are from his pen. They are all terse, luminous, and finished, and the only complaint that one can make against them is that our instructor parts company from us too soon. It is a stroke of literary humour after Pattison's own heart that Bentley, the mightiest of English scholars, should fill no more space in the Encyclopædic pantheon than Alford, who was hardly even the mightiest of English deans. But the fault was more probably with the rector's parsimony of words than with the editor. In 1877 he delivered a lecture, afterwards reprinted in one of the reviews, on Books and Critics. It is not without the usual piquancy and the usual cynicism, but he had nothing particular to say, except to tell his audience that a small house is no excuse for absence of books, inasmuch as a set of shelves, thirteen feet by ten, and six inches deep, will accommodate nearly a thousand octavos; and to hint that a

man making a thousand a year, who spends less than a pound a week on books, ought to be ashamed of himself. There are some other fugitive pieces scattered in the periodicals of the day. In 1871 and 1872 he published editions of the *Essay on Man* and *The Satires and Epistles* of Pope. Ten years before that he had been at last elected to the headship of his college, but the old enthusiasm for influencing young minds was dead. We have spoken of the Rector's timidity and impotence in practical things. Yet it is fair to remember the persevering courage with which he pleaded one unpopular cause. As Mr. Morison said not long ago in these pages, his writings on university organisation, the most important of which appeared in 1868, are a noble monument of patient zeal in the cause for which he cared most. 'Pattison never lost heart, never ceased holding up his ideal of what a university should be, viz. a metropolis of learning in which would be collected and grouped into their various faculties the best scholars and *savants* the country could produce, all working with generous emulation to increase the merit and renown of their chairs. If England ever does obtain such a university, it will be in no small measure to Pattison that she will owe it.'

Yet when the record is completed, it falls short of what might have been expected from one with so many natural endowments, such unrivalled opportunities, such undoubted sincerity of interest. Pattison had none of what so much delighted Carlyle in

Ram-Dass, the Hindoo man-god. When asked what he meant to do for the sins of men, Ram-Dass at once made answer that he had fire enough in his belly to burn up all the sins of the world. Of this abdominal flame Pattison had not a spark. Nor had he that awful sense which no humanism could extinguish in Milton, of service as 'ever in the great Taskmaster's eye.' Nor had he, finally, that civil and secular enthusiasm which made men like Bentham and Mill into great workers and benefactors of their kind. Pattison was of the mind of Fra Paolo in a letter to Casaubon. 'As long as there are men there will be fanaticism. The wisest man has warned us not to expect the world ever to improve so much that the better part of mankind will be the majority. No wise man ever undertakes to correct the disorders of the public estate. He who cannot endure the madness of the public, but goeth about to think he can cure it, is himself no less mad than the rest. So sing to yourself and the muses.' The muses never yet inspired with their highest tunes, whether in prose or verse, men of this degree of unfaith.

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

In 1850 Charlotte Brontë paid a visit to Harriet Martineau at Ambleside, and she wrote to her friends various emphatic accounts of her hostess. 'Without adopting her theories,' Miss Brontë said, 'I yet find a worth and greatness in herself, and a consistency, benevolence, perseverance in her practice, such as wins the sincerest esteem and affection. She is not a person to be judged by her writings alone, but rather by her own deeds and life, than which nothing can be more exemplary or noble.'

The division which Miss Brontë thus makes between opinions and character, and again between literary production and character, is at the root of any just criticism of the two volumes of autobiography which have just been given to the public. Of the third volume, *The Memorials*, by Mrs. Chapman, it is impossible to say anything serious. Mrs. Chapman fought an admirable fight in the dark times of American history for the abolition of slavery, but unhappily she is without literary gifts; and this third volume is one more illustration of the folly of entrusting the composition of biography to persons who have only

the wholly irrelevant claim of intimate friendship, or kinship, or sympathy in public causes. The qualification for a biographer is not in the least that he is a virtuous person, or a second cousin, or a dear friend, or a trusty colleague; but that he knows how to write a book, has tact, style, taste, considerateness, sense of proportion, and a good eye for the beginnings and ends of things. The third volume, then, tells us little about the person to whom they relate. The two volumes of autobiography tell all that we can seek to know, and the reader who judges them in an equitable spirit will be ready to allow that, when all is said that can be said of her hardness, arbitrariness, and insularity, Harriet Martineau is still a singular and worthy figure among the conspicuous personages of a generation that has now almost vanished. Some will wonder how it was that her literary performances acquired so little of permanent value. Others will be pained by the distinct repudiation of all theology, avowed by her with a simple and courageous directness that can scarcely be counted other than honourable to her. But everybody will admit, as Charlotte Brontë did, that though her books are not of the first nor of the second rank, and though her anti-theological opinions are to many so repugnant, yet behind books and opinions was a remarkable personality, a sure eye for social realities, a moral courage that never flinched; a strong judgment within its limits; a vigorous self-reliance both in opinion and act, which yet did not prevent a habit of the most

neutral self-judgment; the commonplace virtues of industry and energy devoted to aims too elevated, and too large and generous, to be commonplace; a splendid sincerity, a magnificent love of truth. And that all these fine qualities, which would mostly be described as manly, should exist not in a man but a woman, and in a woman who discharged admirably such feminine duties as fell to her, fills up the measure of our interest in such a character.

Harriet Martineau was born at Norwich in 1802, and she died, as we all remember, in the course of the summer of 1876. Few people have lived so long as three-quarters of a century, and undergone so little substantial change of character, amid some very important changes of opinion. Her family was Unitarian, and family life was in her case marked by some of that stiffness, that severity, that chilly rigour, with which Unitarians are sometimes taxed by religionists of a more ecstatic doctrine. Her childhood was very unhappy; the household seems to have been unamiable, and she was treated with none of that tenderness and sympathy for which firm and defiant natures are apt to yearn as strongly as others that get the credit of greater sensibility. With that singular impulse to suicide which is frequent among children, though rarer with girls than boys, she went one day into the kitchen for the carving-knife, that she might cut her throat; luckily the servants were at dinner, and the child retreated. Deafness, which

proved incurable, began to afflict her before she was sixteen. A severe, harsh, and mournful kind of religiosity seized her, and this 'abominable spiritual rigidity,' as she calls it, confirmed all the gloomy predispositions of her mind. She learned a good deal, mastering Latin, French, and Italian in good time; and reading much in her own tongue, including constant attention to the Bible, with all sorts of commentaries and explanations, such as those of us who were brought up in a certain spiritual atmosphere have only too good reasons never to forget. This expansion of intellectual interest, however, did not make her less silent, less low in her spirits, less full of vague and anxious presentiment. The reader is glad when these ungracious years of youth are at an end, and the demands of active life stirred Harriet Martineau's energies into vigorous work.

In 1822 her father died, and seven years later his widow and his daughters lost at a single blow nearly all that they had in the world. Before this event, which really proved to be a blessing in the disguise of a catastrophe, Harriet Martineau had written a number of slight pieces. They had been printed, and received a certain amount of recognition. They were of a religious cast, as was natural in one with whom religious literature, and religious life and observance, had hitherto taken in the whole sphere of her continual experience. *Traditions of Palestine* and *Devotional Exercises* are titles that tell their own tale, and we may be sure that their authoress was still at the antipodean point

of the positive philosophy in which she ended her speculative journey. She still clung undoubtingly to what she had been brought up to believe when she won three prizes for essays intended to present Unitarianism to the notice of Jews, of Catholics, and of Mahometans. Her success in these and similar efforts turned her mind more decidedly towards literature as a profession.

Miss Martineau is at some pains to assure us on several occasions that it was the need of utterance now and always that drove her to write, and that money, although welcome when it came, was never her motive. This perhaps a little savours of affectation. Nobody would dream of suspecting Miss Martineau of writing anything that she did not believe to be true or useful merely for the sake of money. But there is plenty of evidence that the prospect of payment stirred her to true and useful work, as it does many other authors by profession, and as it does the followers of all professions whatever. She puts the case fairly enough in another place (i. 422):—'Every author is in a manner an adventurer; and no one was ever more decidedly so than myself; but the difference between one kind of adventurer and another is, I believe, simply this—that the one has something to say which presses for utterance, and is uttered at length without a view to future fortunes; while the other has a sort of general inclination towards literature, without any specific need of utterance, and a very definite desire for the honours and rewards of

the literary career.' Even in the latter case, however, honest journeyman's work enough is done in literature by men and women who seek nothing higher than a reputable source of income. Miss Martineau did, no doubt, seek objects far higher and more generous than income, but she lived on the income which literature brought to her; and there seems a certain failure of her usually admirable common sense in making any ado about so simple a matter. When doctors and counsel refuse their guineas, and the parson declines a stipend, it will be quite soon enough for the author to be especially anxious to show that he has a right to regard money much as the rest of the human race regard it.

Miss Martineau underwent the harsh ordeal which awaits most literary aspirants. She had a scheme in her head for a long series of short tales to illustrate some of the propositions of political economy. She trudged about London day after day, through mud and fog, with weary limbs and anxious heart, as many an author has done before and since. The times were bad; cholera was abroad; people were full of apprehension and concern about the Reform Bill; and the publishers looked coldly on a doubtful venture. Miss Martineau talks none of the conventional nonsense about the cruelty and stupidity of publishers. What she says is this: 'I have always been anxious to extend to young or struggling authors the sort of aid which would have been so precious to me in that winter of 1829-1830, and I know that, in above twenty years, I

have never succeeded but once.' One of the most distinguished editors in London, who had charge of a periodical for many years, told us what comes to the same thing, namely, that in no single case during all these years did a volunteer contributor of real quality, or with any promise of eminence, present himself or herself. So many hundreds think themselves called so few are chosen. In Miss Martineau's case, however, the trade made a mistake. When at length she found some one to go halves with her in the enterprise, on terms extremely disadvantageous to herself, the first of her tales was published (1832), and instantly had a prodigious success. The sale ran up to more than ten thousand of each monthly volume. In that singular autobiographical sketch of herself which Miss Martineau prepared for a London paper, to be printed as her obituary notice, she pronounced a judgment upon this work which more disinterested, though not more impartial, critics will confirm. Her own unalterable view, she says, of what the work could and could not effect, 'prevented her from expecting too much from it, either in regard to its social operations or its influence on her own fame. The original idea of exhibiting the great natural laws of society by a series of pictures of selected social action was a fortunate one; and her tales initiated a multitude of minds into the conception of what political economy is, and how it concerns everybody living in society. Beyond this there is no merit of a high order in the work. It popularised in a fresh form

some doctrines and many truths long before made public by others.' James Mill, one of the acutest economists of the day, and one of the most vigorous and original characters of that or any other day, had foretold failure; but when the time came, he very handsomely admitted that his prophecy had been rash. In after years, when Miss Martineau had acquired from Comte a conception of the growth and movement of societies as a whole, with their economic conditions controlled and constantly modified by a multitude of other conditions of various kinds, she rated the science of her earlier days very low. Even in those days, however, she says: 'I believe I should not have been greatly surprised or displeased to have perceived, even then, that the pretended science is no science at all, strictly speaking; and that so many of its parts must undergo essential change, that it may be a question whether future generations will owe much more to it than the benefit (inestimable, to be sure) of establishing the grand truth that social affairs proceed according to general laws, no less than natural phenomena of every kind' (*Autob.* ii. 245).

Harriet Martineau was not of the class of writers, most of them terribly unprofitable, who merely say literary things about social organisation, its institutions, and their improvement. Her feeling about society was less literary than scientific: it was not sentimental, but the business-like quality of a good administrator. She was moved less by pity or by any sense of the pathos and the hardness of the

world, than by a sensible and energetic interest in good government and in the rational and convenient ordering of things. Her tales to illustrate the truths of political economy are what might be expected from a writer of this character. They are far from being wanting—many of them—in the genuine interest of good story-telling. They are rapid, definite, and without a trace of either slovenliness or fatigue. We are amazed as we think of the speed and prompt regularity with which they were produced; and the fertile ingenuity with which the pill of political economy is wrapped up in the confectionery of a tale, may stand as a marvel of true cleverness and inventive dexterity. Of course, of imagination or invention in a high sense there is not a trace. Such a quality was not in the gifts of the writer, nor could it in any case have worked within such limitations as those set by the matter and the object of the series.

Literary success was followed in the usual order by social temptation. Miss Martineau removed from Norwich to London, and she had good reasons for making the change. Her work dealt with matters of a political kind, and she could only secure a real knowledge of what was best worth saying by intercourse with those who had a better point of view for a survey of the social state of England than could be found in a provincial town like Norwich. So far as evening parties went, Miss Martineau soon perceived how little 'essential difference there is between the extreme case of a cathedral city and that of literary London, or

any other place, where dissipation takes the turn of *book-talk instead of dancing or masquerading.*' She went out to dinner every night except Sundays, and saw all the most interesting people of the London of five-and-forty years ago. While she was free from presumptuousness in her judgments, she was just as free from a foolish willingness to take the reputations of her hour on trust. Her attitude was friendly and sensible, but it was at the same time critical and independent; and that is what every frank, upright, and sterling character naturally becomes in face of an unfamiliar society. Harriet Martineau was too keen-sighted, too aware of the folly and incompetent pretension of half the world, too consciously self-respecting and proud, to take society and its ways with any diffidence or ingenuous simplicity. On the importance of the small *littérateur* who unreasonably thinks himself a great one, on the airs and graces of the gushing blue-stockings who were in vogue in that day, on the detestable vulgarity of literary lionising, she had no mercy. She recounts with caustic relish the story about a certain pedantical lady, of whom Tierney had said that there was not another head in England that could encounter hers on the subject of Cause and Effect. The story was that when in a country house one fine day she took her seat in a window, saying in a business-like manner (to David Ricardo): 'Come now, let us have a little discussion about Space.' We remember a story about a certain Mademoiselle de Launay, afterwards well known to the Paris of the

eighteenth century, being introduced at Versailles by a silly great lady who had an infatuation for her. 'This,' the great lady kept saying, 'is the young person whom I have told you about, who is so wonderfully intelligent, who knows so much. Come, Mademoiselle, pray talk. Now, Madame, you will see how she talks. Well, first of all, now talk a little about religion; then you can tell us about something else.'

We cannot wonder that Miss Martineau did not go a second time to the house where Space might be the unprovoked theme of a casual chat. Pretension in every shape she hated most heartily. Her judgments in most cases were thoroughly just—at this period of her life at any rate—and sometimes even unexpectedly kindly; and the reason is that she looked at society through the medium of a strong and penetrating kind of common sense, which is more often the gift of clever women than of clever men. If she is masculine, she is, like Mrs. Colonel Poyntz, in one of Bulwer's novels, 'masculine in a womanly way.' There is a real spirit of ethical divination in some of her criticism of character. Take the distinguished man whose name we have just written. 'There was Bulwer on a sofa,' she says, 'sparkling and languishing among a set of female votaries—he and they dizened out, perfumed, and presenting the nearest picture to a seraglio to be seen on British ground—only the indifference or hauteur of the lord of the harem being absent.' Yet this disagreeable sight does not prevent her from feeling a cordial interest in him, amidst any

amount of vexation and pity for his weakness. 'He seems to be a woman of genius inclosed by misadventure in a man's form. He has insight, experience, sympathy, letters, power and grace of expression, and an irrepressible impulse to utterance, and industry which should have produced works of the noblest quality; and these have been intercepted by mischiefs which may be called misfortune rather than fault. His friendly temper, his generous heart, his excellent conversation (at his best), and his simple manners (when he forgot himself), have many a time 'left me mourning' that such a being should allow himself to sport with perdition.' Those who knew most about Bulwer, and who were most repelled by his terrible faults, will feel in this page of Miss Martineau's the breath of social equity in which charity is not allowed to blur judgment, nor moral disapproval to narrow, starve, and discolour vision into lost possibilities of character. And we may note in passing how even here, in the mere story of the men and women whom she met in London drawing-rooms, Harriet Martineau does not lose herself in gossip about individuals looked at merely in their individual relations. It is not merely the 'blighting of promise nor the forfeiture of a career' that she deplores in the case of a Bulwer or a Brougham; it is 'the intercepting of national blessings.' If this view of natural gifts as a source of blessing to society, and not merely of power or fame to their privileged possessor, were more common than it is, the impression which such a thought is calculated

to make would be the highest available protection against those blighted promises and forfeited careers, of which Brougham and Bulwer were only two out of a too vast host of examples.

It is the very fulness with which she is possessed by this large way of conceiving a life in its manifold relations to the service of the world, that is the secret of Harriet Martineau's firm, clear, calm, and almost neutral way of judging both her own work and character and those of others. By calm we do not mean that she was incapable of strong and direct censure. Many of her judgments, both here and in her *Biographic Sketches*, are stern; and some—like that on Macaulay, for instance—may even pass for harsh. But they are never the product of mere anger or heatedness, and it is a great blunder to suppose that reasoned severity is incompatible with perfect composure, or that calm is another name for amiable vapidity.

> Thöricht ist's
> In allen Stücken billig sein; es heisst
> Sein eigen Selbst zerstören.

Her condemnation of the Whigs, for example, is as stringent and outspoken as condemnation can be; yet it is a deliberate and reasoned judgment, not a mere bitterness or prejudice. The Whigs were at that moment, between 1832 and 1834, at the height of their authority, political, literary, and social. After a generation of misgovernment they had been borne to power on the tide of national enthusiasm for

parliamentary reform, and for all those improvements in our national life to which parliamentary reform was no more than the first step. The harshness and darkness of the past generation were the measure of the hopes of the new time. These hopes, which were at least as strong in Harriet Martineau as in anybody then living, the Whigs were soon felt to have cheated. She cannot forgive them. Speaking of John and Edward Romilly, 'they had virtuous projects,' she says, 'and had every hope of achieving service worthy of their father's fame; but their aspirations were speedily tamed down—as all high aspirations *are* lowered by Whig influences.' A certain peer is described as 'agreeable enough in society to those who are not very particular in regard to sincerity; and was, as Chancellor of the Exchequer or anything else, as good a representative as could be found of the flippancy, conceit, and official helplessness and ignorance of the Whig administration.' Charles Knight started a new periodical for the people under the patronage of the official Whigs. 'But the poverty and perverseness of their ideas, and the insolence of their feelings, were precisely what might be expected by all who really knew that remarkably vulgar class of men. They purposed to lecture the working classes, who were by far the wiser party of the two, in a jejune, coaxing, dull, religious-tract sort of tone, and criticised and deprecated everything like vigour, and a manly and genial tone of address in the new publication, while trying to push in as contributors effete

and exhausted writers and friends of their own, who knew about as much of the working classes of England as of those of Turkey.' This energetic description, which belongs to the year 1848, gives us an interesting measure of the distance that has been traversed during the last thirty years. The workmen have acquired direct political power; they have organised themselves into effective groups for industrial purposes; they have produced leaders of ability and sound judgment; and the Whig who seeks their support must stoop or rise to talk a Radicalism that would have amply satisfied even Harriet Martineau herself.

The source of this improvement in the society to which she bade farewell, over that into which she had been born, is set down by Miss Martineau to the most remarkable literary genius with whom, during her residence in London, she was brought into contact. 'What Wordsworth did for poetry,' she says, 'in bringing us out of a conventional idea and method to a true and simple one, Carlyle has done for morality. He may be himself the most curious opposition to himself—he may be the greatest mannerist of his age while denouncing conventionalism—the greatest talker while eulogising silence—the most woful complainer while glorifying fortitude—the most uncertain and stormy in mood, while holding forth serenity as the greatest good within the reach of man; but he has nevertheless infused into the mind of the English nation a sincerity, earnestness, healthfulness, and courage which can be appreciated only by those who

are old enough to tell what was our morbid state when Byron was the representative of our temper, the Clapham church of our religion, and the rotten-borough system of our political morality.' We have no quarrel with this account of the greatest man of letters of our generation. But Carlyle has only been one influence among others. It is a far cry indeed from *Sartor Resartus* to the *Tracts for the Times*, yet they were both of them protests against the same thing, both of them attempted answers to the same problem, and the *Tracts* perhaps did more than *Sartor* to quicken spiritual life, to shatter 'the Clapham church,' and to substitute a mystic faith and not unlovely hope for the frigid, hard, and mechanical lines of official orthodoxy on the one hand, and the egotism and sentimental despair of Byronism on the other. There is a third school, too, and Harriet Martineau herself was no insignificant member of it, to which both the temper and the political morality of our time have owed a deep debt; the school of those utilitarian political thinkers who gave light rather than heat, and yet by the intellectual force with which they insisted on the right direction of social reform, also stirred the very impulse which made men desire social reform. The most illustrious of this body was undoubtedly John Mill; because to accurate political science he added a fervid and vibrating social sympathy, and a power of quickening it in the best minds of a scientific turn. It is odd, by the way, that Miss Martineau, while so lavish in

deserved panegyric on Carlyle, should be so grudging and disparaging in the case of Mill, with whom her intellectual affinities must have been closer than with any other of her contemporaries. The translator of Comte's *Positive Philosophy* had better reasons than most people for thinking well of the services of the author of the *System of Logic:* it was certainly the latter book which did more than any other to prepare the minds of the English philosophic public for the former.

It is creditable to Miss Martineau's breadth of sympathy that she should have left on record the tribute of her admiration for Carlyle, for nobody has written so harshly as Carlyle on the subject which interested Harriet Martineau more passionately than any other events of her time. In 1834 she had finished her series of illustrations of political economy; her domestic life was fretted by the unreasonable exigences of her mother; London society had perhaps begun to weary her, and she felt the need of a change of scene. The United States, with the old European institutions placed amid new conditions, were then as now a natural object of interest to everybody with a keen feeling for social improvement. So to the Western Republic Miss Martineau turned her face. She had not been long in the States before she began to feel that the Abolitionists, at that moment a despised and persecuted handful of men and women, were the truly moral and regenerating party in the country. Harriet Martineau no sooner felt this con-

viction driving out her former prejudice against them as fanatical and impracticable, than she at once bore public testimony, at serious risk of every kind to herself, in favour of the extreme Anti-Slavery agitators. And for thirty years she never slackened her sympathy nor her energetic action on English public opinion, in this most vital matter of her time. She was guided not merely by humanitarian disgust at the cruel and brutal abominations of slavery,—though we know no reason why this alone should not be a sufficient ground for turning Abolitionist,—but also on the more purely political ground of the cowardice, silence, corruption, and hypocrisy that were engendered in the Free States by purchased connivance at the peculiar institution of the Slave States. Nobody has yet traced out the full effect upon the national character of the Americans of all those years of conscious complicity in slavery, after the moral iniquity of slavery had become clear to the inner conscience of the very men who ignobly sanctioned the mobbing of Abolitionists.

In the summer of 1836 Miss Martineau returned to England, having added this great question to the stock of her foremost objects of interest and concern. Such additions, whether literary or social, are the best kind of refreshment that travel supplies. She published two books on America: one of them abstract and quasi-scientific, *Society in America;* the other, *A Retrospect of Western Travel*, of a lighter and more purely descriptive quality. Their success with the

public was moderate, and in after years she condemned them in very plain language, the first of them especially as 'full of affectations and preachments.' Their only service, and it was not inconsiderable, was the information which they circulated as to the condition of slavery and of the country under it. We do not suppose that they are worth reading at the present day, except from a historical point of view. But they are really good specimens of a kind of literature which is not abundant, and yet which is of the utmost value—we mean the record of the sociological observation of a country by a competent traveller, who stays long enough in the country, has access to the right persons of all kinds, and will take pains enough to mature his judgments. It was a happy idea of O'Connell's to suggest that she should go over to Ireland, and write such an account of that country as she had written of the United States. And we wish at this very hour that some one as competent as Miss Martineau would do what O'Connell wished her to do. A similar request came to her from Milan: why should she not visit Lombardy, and then tell Europe the true tale of Austrian rule?

But after her American journey Miss Martineau felt a very easily intelligible desire to change the literary field. For many years she had been writing almost entirely about fact: and the constraint of the effort to be always correct, and to bear without solicitude the questioning of her correctness, had become burdensome. She felt the danger of losing nerve

and becoming morbidly fearful of criticism on the one hand, and of growing narrow and mechanical about accuracy on the other. 'I longed inexpressibly,' she says, 'for the liberty of fiction, while occasionally doubting whether I had the power to use that freedom as I could have done ten years before.' The product of this new mental phase was *Deerbrook*, which was published in the spring of 1839. *Deerbrook* is a story of an English country village, its petty feuds, its gentilities, its chances and changes of fortune. The influence of Jane Austen's stories is seen in every chapter; but Harriet Martineau had none of the easy flow, the pleasant humour, the light-handed irony of her model, any more than she had the energetic and sustained imaginative power of Charlotte or Emily Brontë. There is playfulness enough in *Deerbrook*, but it is too deliberate to remind us of the crooning involuntary playfulness of *Pride and Prejudice* or *Sense and Sensibility*. *Deerbrook* is not in the least a story with a moral; it is truly and purely a piece of art; yet we are conscious of the serious spirit of the social reformer as haunting the background, and only surrendering the scene for reasons of its own. On the other hand, there is in *Deerbrook* a gravity of moral reflection that Jane Austen, whether wisely or unwisely, seldom or never attempts. In this respect *Deerbrook* is the distant forerunner of some of George Eliot's most characteristic work. Distant, because George Eliot's moralising is constantly suffused by the broad light of a highly poetic imagination, and this

was in no degree among Miss Martineau's gifts. Still there is something above the flat touch of the common didactic in such a page as that in which (chapter xix.) she describes the case of 'the unamiable—the only order of evil ones who suffer hell without seeing and knowing that it is hell: nay, they are under a heavier curse than even this, they inflict torments second only to their own, with an unconsciousness worthy of spirits of light.' However, when all is said, we may agree that this is one of the books that give a rational person pleasure once, but which we hardly look forward to reading again.

Shortly after the publication of her first novel, Miss Martineau was seized by a serious internal malady, from which recovery seemed hopeless. According to her usual practice of taking her life deliberately in her hands, and settling its conditions for herself, instead of letting things drift as they might, she insisted on declining the hospitable shelter pressed upon her by a near relative, on the excellent ground that it is wrong for an invalid to impose restraints upon a healthy household. She proceeded to establish herself in lodgings at Tynemouth on the coast of Northumberland. Here she lay on a couch for nearly five years, seeing as few persons as might be, and working at such literary matters as came into her head with steadfast industry and fortitude. The ordeal was hard, but the little book that came of it, *Life in a Sickroom*, remains to show the moods in which the ordeal was borne.

At length Miss Martineau was induced to try mesmerism as a possible cure for her disease, and what is certain is, that after trying mesmeric treatment, the invalid whom the doctors had declared incurable shortly recovered as perfect health as she had ever known. A virulent controversy arose upon the case, for, by some curious law, physicians are apt to import into professional disputes a heat and bitterness at least as marked as that of their old enemies, the theologians. It was said that Miss Martineau had begun to improve before she was mesmerised, and what was still more to the point, that she had been taking heavy doses of iodine. 'It is beyond all question or dispute,' as Voltaire said, 'that magic words and ceremonies are quite capable of most effectually destroying a whole flock of sheep, if the words be accompanied by a sufficient quantity of arsenic.'

Mesmerism was indirectly the means of bringing Miss Martineau into an intimate acquaintance with a gentleman, who soon began to exert a decisive influence upon the most important of her opinions. Mr. Atkinson is still alive, and we need not say much about him. He seems to have been a grave and sincere person, using his mind with courageous independence upon the great speculative problems which were not in 1844, as they are in 1877, the common topics of every-day intercourse among educated people. This is not the place for an examination of the philosophy in which Miss Martineau was finally landed by Mr. Atkinson's influence. That philosophy was given

to the world in 1851, in a volume called *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development.* The greater part of it was written by Mr. Atkinson in reply to short letters, in which Miss Martineau stated objections and propounded questions. The book points in the direction of that explanation of the facts of the universe which is now so familiar under the name of Evolution. But it points in this way only, as the once famous *Vestiges of Creation* pointed towards the scientific hypotheses of Darwin and Wallace; or as Buckle's crude and superficial notions about the history of civilisation pointed towards a true and complete conception of sociology. That is to say, the Atkinson Letters state some of the difficulties in the way of the explanations of life and motion hitherto received as satisfactory; they insist upon approaching the facts exclusively by the positive, Baconian, or inductive method; and then they hurry to an explanation of their own, which may be as plausible as that which they intend it to replace, but which they leave equally without ordered proof and strict verification.

The only point to which we are called upon to refer is that this way of thinking about man and the rest of nature led to repudiation by Miss Martineau of the whole structure of dogmatic theology. For one thing, she ceased to hold the conception of a God with any human attributes whatever; also of any principle or practice of Design; 'of an administration of life according to human wishes, or of the affairs of the world by the principles of human morals.' All

these became to her as mere visions; beliefs necessary in their day, but not philosophically nor permanently true. Miss Martineau was not an Atheist in the philosophic sense; she never denied a First Cause, but only that this Cause is within the sphere of human attributes, or can be defined in their terms.

Then, for another thing, she ceased to believe in the probability of there being a continuance of conscious individual life after the dissolution of the body. With this, of course, fell all expectation of a state of personal rewards and punishments. 'The real and justifiable and honourable subject of interest,' she said, 'to human beings, living and dying, is the welfare of their fellows surrounding them or surviving them.' About that she cared supremely, and about nothing else did she bring herself to care at all. It is painful to many people even to hear of a person holding such beliefs as these. Yet it would plainly be the worst kind of spiritual valetudinarianism to insist on the omission from even the shortest account of this remarkable woman, of what became the very basis and foundation of her life for those thirty years of it, which she herself always counted the happiest part of the whole.

Although it was Mr. Atkinson who finally provided her with a positive substitute for her older beliefs, yet a journey which Miss Martineau made in the East shortly after her restoration to health (1846) had done much to build up in her mind a historic conception of the origin and order of the great faiths

of mankind—the Christian, the Hebrew, the Mahometan, the old Egyptian. We need not say more on this subject. The work in which she published the experiences of the journey which was always so memorable to her, deserves a word. There are few more delightful books of travel than *Eastern Life, Past and Present.* The descriptions are admirably graphic, and they have the attraction of making their effect by a few direct strokes, without any of the wordy elaboration of our modern picturesque. The writer shows a true feeling for nature, and she shows a vigorous sense, which is not merely pretty sentiment, like Chateaubriand's, for the vast historic associations of those old lands and dim cradles of the race. All is sterling and real; we are aware that the elevated reflection and the meditative stroke are not due to mere composition, but did actually pass through her mind as the suggestive wonders passed before her eyes. And hence there is no jar as we find a little homily on the advantage of being able to iron your own linen on a Nile boat, followed by a lofty page on the mighty pair of solemn figures that gaze as from eternity on time amid the sand at Thebes. The whole, one may say again, is sterling and real, both the elevation and the homeliness. The student of the history of opinion may find some interest in comparing Miss Martineau's work with the famous book, *Ruins; or, Meditations on the Revolutions of Empires,* in which Volney, between fifty and sixty years before, had drawn equally dissolvent conclusions with her

own from the same panorama of the dead ages. Perhaps Miss Martineau's history is not much better than Volney's, but her brisk sense is preferable to Volney's high *à priori* declamation and artificial rhetoric.

Before starting for the East, Miss Martineau had settled a new plan of life for herself, and built a little house where she thought she could best carry her plan out. To this little house she returned, and it became her cherished home for the long remainder of her days. London, during the years of her first success, had not been without its usual attractions to the new-comer, but she had always been alive to the essential incompleteness, the dispersion, the want of steadfast self-collection, in a life much passed in London society. And we may believe that the five austere and lonely years at Tynemouth, with their evening outlook over the busy waters of the harbour-bar into the stern far-off sea, may have slowly bred in her an unwillingness to plunge again into the bustling triviality, the gossip, the distracting lightness of the world of splendid fireflies. To have discerned the Pale Horse so near and for so long a space awakens new moods, and strangely alters the old perspectives of our life. Yet it would imply a misunderstanding of Harriet Martineau's character to suppose that she turned her back upon London, and built her pretty hermitage at Ambleside, in anything like the temper of Jean Jacques Rousseau. She was far too positive a spirit for that, and far too full of vivid and con-

centrated interest in men and their doings. It would be unjust to think of Harriet Martineau as having no ear for the inner voices, yet her whole nature was objective; it turned to practice and not to reverie. She had her imaginative visions, as we know, and as all truly superior minds have them, even though their main superiority happens to be in the practical order. But her visions were limited as a landscape set in a rigid frame; they had not the wings that soar and poise in the vague unbounded empyrean. And she was much too sensible to think that these moods were strong, or constant, or absorbing enough in her case to furnish material and companionship for a life from day to day and year to year. Nor again was it for the sake of undisturbed acquisition of knowledge, nor cultivation of her finer faculties that she sought a hermitage. She was not moved by thought of the famous maxim which Goethe puts into the mouth of Leonore—

> Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille,
> Sich ein Charakter im dem Strom der Welt.

Though an intense egotist, in the good and respectable sense of insisting on her own way of doing things, of settling for herself what it was that she was living for, and of treading the path with a firm and self-reliant step, yet Harriet Martineau was as little of an egotist as ever lived, in the poor and stifling sense of thinking of the perfecting of her own culture as in the least degree worthy of ranking among Ends-in-

and the condensed version of Comte's *Positive Philosophy* (1853), both of them meritorious and useful pieces of work, and both of them undertaken, as nearly all Miss Martineau's work was, not from merely literary motives, but because she thought that they would be meritorious and useful, and because nothing more useful came into her head or under her hand at the moment. The condensation of Comte is easy and rapid, and it is said by those who have looked very closely into it to be hardly free from some too hasty renderings. It must, however, on the whole, be pronounced a singularly intelligent and able performance. The pace at which Comte was able to compose is a standing marvel to all who have pondered the great and difficult art of composition. It must be admitted that the author of the English version of him was in this respect no unworthy match for her original. Miss Martineau tells us that she despatched the last three volumes, which number over 1800 pages, in some five months. She thought the rendering of thirty pages of Comte a fair morning's work. If we consider the abstract and difficult nature of the matter, this must be pronounced something of a feat. We have not space to describe her method, but any reader who happens to be interested in the mechanism of literary productions will find the passage in vol. ii. p. 391. The *History of the Thirty Years' Peace* is no less astonishing an example of rapid industry. From the first opening of the books to study for the history to the depositing of the MS. of the first volume at

press, was exactly six months. The second volume took six months to do, with an interval of some weeks of holiday and other work!

We think all this worth mentioning, because it is an illustration of what is a highly important maxim; namely, that it is a great mistake to expend more time and labour on a piece of composition than is enough to make it serve the purpose in hand. The immeasurable moment and far-reachingness of the very highest kinds of literature are apt to make men who play at being students forget there are many other kinds of literature which are are not in the least immeasurably far-reaching, but which, for all that, are extremely useful in their own day and generation. Those highly fastidious and indolent people, who sometimes live at Oxford and Cambridge, with whom, indeed, for the most part, their high fastidiousness is only a fine name for impotence and lack of will, forget that the less immortal kinds of literature are the only kinds within their own reach. Literature is no doubt a fine art—the finest of the arts—but it is also a practical art; and it is deplorable to think how much stout, instructive work might and ought to be done by people who, in dreaming of ideals in prose or verse beyond their attainment, end, like the poor Casaubon of fiction, in a little pamphlet on a particle, or else in mediocre poetry, or else in nothing. By insisting on rearing nothing short of a great monument more durable than brass, they are cutting themselves off from building the useful little

mud-hut, or some of the other modest performances by which only they are capable of serving their age. It is only one volume in a million that is not meant to perish, and to perish soon, as flowers, sunbeams, and all the other brightnesses of the earth are meant to perish. There are some forms of composition in which perfection is not only good but indispensable. But the most are designed for the purpose of a day, and if they have the degree of elaboration, accuracy, grasp, and faithfulness that suffice for the given purpose, then we may say that it is enough. There is literature proper, for which only two or three men and women in a generation have the true gift. This cannot be too good. But besides this there is a mass of honest and needful work to be done with the pen, to which literary form is only accidental, and in which consummate literary finish or depth is a sheer work of supererogation. If Miss Martineau had given twice as many years as she gave months to the condensation of Comte, the book would not have been a whit more useful in any possible respect—indeed, over-elaboration might easily have made it much less so—and the world would have lost many other excellent, if not dazzling or stupendous services.

'Her original power,' she wrote of herself in that manly and outspoken obituary notice to which we have already referred, 'was nothing more than was due to earnestness and intellectual clearness within a certain range. With small imaginative and suggestive powers, and therefore nothing approaching to

genius, she could see clearly what she did see, and give a clear expression to what she had to say. In short, she could popularise, while she could neither discover nor invent. . . . She could obtain and keep a firm grasp of her own views, and moreover she could make them understood. The function of her life was to do this, and in as far as it was done diligently and honestly, her life was of use.' All this is precisely true, and her life was of great use; and that makes what she says not only true, but an example worth much weighing by many of those who meddle with literature.

Miss Martineau was never tired of trying to be useful in directing and improving opinion. She did not disdain the poor neighbours at her gates. She got them to establish a Building Society, she set them an example of thrifty and profitable management by her little farm of two acres, and she gave them interesting and cheerful courses of lectures in the winter evenings. All this time her eye was vigilant for the great affairs of the world. In 1852 she began to write leading articles for the *Daily News*, and in this department her industry and her aptitude were such that at times she wrote as many as six leading articles in a week. When she died, it was computed that she had written sixteen hundred. They are now all dead enough, as they were meant to die, but they made an impression that is still alive in its consequences upon some of the most important social, political, and economical matters of five-and-

twenty important years. In what was by far the greatest of all the issues of those years, the Civil War in the United States, Harriet Martineau's influence was of the most inestimable value in keeping public opinion right against the strong tide of ignorant Southern sympathies in this country. If she may seem to some to have been less right in her views of the Crimean War, we must admit that the issues were very complex, and that complete assurance on that struggle is not easy to everybody even at this distance of time.

To this period belong the Biographic Sketches which she contributed to a London newspaper. They have since been collected in a single volume, now in its fourth edition. They are masterpieces in the style of the vignette. Their conciseness, their clearness in fact, their definiteness in judgment, and above all, the rightly graduated impression of the writer's own personality in the background, make them perfect in their kind. There is no fretting away of the portrait in over-multiplicity of lines and strokes. Here more than anywhere else Miss Martineau shows the true quality of the writer, the true mark of literature, the sense of proportion, the modulated sentence, the compact and suggestive phrase. There is a happy precision, a pithy brevity, a condensed argumentativeness. And this literary skill is made more telling by the writer's own evident interest and sincerity about the real lives and characters of the various conspicuous people with whom she deals. It may be

said that she has no subtle insight into the complexities of human nature, and that her philosophy of character is rather too little analytical, too downright, too content with averages of motive, and too external. This is so in a general way, but it does not spoil the charm of these sketches, because the personages concerned, though all of them conspicuous, were for the most part commonplace in motive, though more than commonplace in strength of faculty. Subtle analysis is wholly unreasonable in the case of Miss Martineau herself, and she would probably have been unable to use that difficult instrument in criticising characters less downright and objective than her own.

The moment of the Crimean War marked an alarming event in her own life. The doctors warned her that she had a heart disease which would end her days suddenly and soon. Miss Martineau at once set her affairs in order, and sat down to write her Autobiography. She had the manuscript put into type, and the sheets finally printed off, just as we now possess them. But the hour was not yet. The doctors had exaggerated the peril, and the strong woman lived for twenty years after she had been given up. She used up the stuff of her life to the very end, and left no dreary remnant nor morbid waste of days. She was like herself to the last—English, practical, positive. Yet she had thoughts and visions which were more than this. We like to think of this faithful woman and veteran worker in good causes, in the stroll which she always

took on her terrace before retiring to rest for the night:—

'On my terrace there were two worlds extended bright before me, even when the midnight darkness hid from my bodily eyes all but the outlines of the solemn mountains that surround our valley on three sides, and the clear opening to the lake on the south. In the one of those worlds I saw now the magnificent coast of Massachusetts in autumn, or the flowery swamps of Louisiana, or the forests of Georgia in spring, or the Illinois prairie in summer; or the blue Nile, or the brown Sinai, or the gorgeous Petra, or the view of Damascus from the Salahiey; or the Grand Canal under a Venetian sunset, or the Black Forest in twilight, or Malta in the glare of noon, or the broad desert stretching away under the stars, or the Red Sea tossing its superb shells on shore in the pale dawn. That is one world, all comprehended within my terrace wall, and coming up into the light at my call. The other and finer scenery is of that world, only beginning to be explored, of Science. . . . It is truly an exquisite pleasure to dream, after the toil of study, on the sublime abstractions of mathematics; the transcendent scenery unrolled by astronomy; the mysterious, invisible forces dimly hinted to us by physics; the new conception of the constitution of matter originated by chemistry; and then, the inestimable glimpses opened to us, in regard to the nature and destiny of man, by the researches into vegetable and animal organisation, which are at length perceived

to be the right path of inquiry into the highest subjects of thought. . . . Wondrous beyond the comprehension of any one mind is the mass of glorious facts and the series of mighty conceptions laid open; but the shadow of the surrounding darkness rests upon it all. The unknown always engrosses the greater part of the field of vision, and the awe of infinity sanctifies both the study and the dream.'

It would be a pity if difference of opinion upon subjects of profound difficulty, remoteness, and manifold perplexity, were to prevent any one from recognising in such words and such moods as these what was, in spite of some infirmities, a character of many large thoughts and much generous purpose. And with this feeling we may part from her.

W. R. GREG: A SKETCH.

It is perhaps a little hard to undertake to write about the personality of a thinker whose ideas one does not share, and whose reading of the events and tendencies of our time was in most respects directly opposite to one's own. But literature is neutral ground. Character is more than opinion. Here we may forget the loud cries and sounding strokes, the watchwords and the tactics of the tented field, and fraternise with the adversary of the eve and the morrow in friendly curiosity and liberal recognition. It fell to the present writer at one time to have one or two bouts of public controversy with Mr. Greg. In these dialectics Mr. Greg was never vehement and never pressed, but he was inclined to be—or, at least, was felt by an opponent to be—dry, mordant, and almost harsh. These disagreeable prepossessions were instantly dissipated, as so often happens, by personal acquaintance. He had not only the courtesy of the good type of the man of the world, but an air of moral suavity, when one came near enough to him, that was infinitely attractive and engaging. He was urbane, essentially modest, and readily interested in ideas and subjects

other than his own. There was in his manner and address something of what the French call *liant*. When the chances of residence made me his neighbour, an evening in his drawing-room, or half an hour's talk in casual meetings in afternoon walks on Wimbledon Common, was always a particularly agreeable incident. Some men and women have the quality of atmosphere. The egotism of the natural man is surrounded by an elastic medium. Mr. Greg was one of these personalities with an atmosphere elastic, stimulating, elevating, and yet composing. We do wrong to narrow our interests to those only of our contemporaries who figure with great lustre and *éclat* in the world. Some of the quiet characters away from the centre of great affairs are as well worth our attention as those who in high-heeled cothurnus stalk across the foreground.

Mr. Greg, it is not necessary to say, has a serious reputation in the literature of our time. In politics he was one of the best literary representatives of the fastidious or pedantocratic school of government. In economics he spoke the last word, and fell, sword in hand, in the last trench, of the party of capitalist supremacy and industrial tutelage. In the group of profound speculative questions that have come up for popular discussion since the great yawning rents and fissures have been made in the hypotheses of theology by the hypotheses of science, he set a deep mark on many minds. 'We are in the sick foggy dawn of a new era,' says one distinguished writer of our day, 'and no one saw more clearly than W. R. Greg what

the day that would follow was likely to be.' To this I must humbly venture to demur; for there is no true vision of the fortunes of human society without Hope, and without Faith in the beneficent powers and processes of the Unseen Time. That and no other is the mood in which our sight is most likely to pierce the obscuring mists from which the new era begins to emerge. When we have said so much as this, it remains as true as before that Mr. Greg's faculty of disinterested speculation, his feeling for the problems of life, and his distinction of character, all make it worth while to put something about him on record, and to attempt to describe him as he was, apart from the opaque influences of passing controversy and of discussions that are rapidly losing their point.

Mr. Greg was born at Manchester in 1809. The family stock was Irish by residence and settlement, though Scotch in origin. The family name was half jocosely and half seriously believed to be the middle syllable of the famous clan of Macgregor. William Rathbone Greg's grandfather was a man of good position in the neighbourhood of Belfast, who sent two of his sons to push their fortunes in England. The younger of the two was adopted by an uncle, who carried on the business of a merchant at Manchester. He had no children of his own. The boy was sent to Harrow, where Dr. Samuel Parr was then an assistant master. When the post of head master became vacant, Parr, though only five-and-twenty, entered into a very vehement contest for the prize.

He failed, and in a fit of spleen set up an establishment of his own at Stanmore. Many persons, as De Quincey tells us, of station and influence both lent him money and gave him a sort of countenance equally useful to his interests by placing their sons under his care. Among those who accompanied him from Harrow was Samuel Greg. The lad was meant by his uncle to be a clergyman, but this project he stoutly resisted. Instead of reading for orders he travelled abroad, acquired foreign languages, and found out something about the commercial affairs of the continent of Europe. His uncle died in 1783, and the nephew took up the business. It was the date of the American Peace. Samuel Greg was carried forward on the tide of prosperity that poured over the country after that great event, and in a moderate time he laid the foundation of a large and solid fortune. The mighty industrial revolution that was begun by the inventions of Arkwright was now in its first stage. Arkwright's earliest patent had been taken out a few years before, and his factory in Derbyshire had by this time proved a practical success. Instead of sharing the brutish animosity of the manufacturers of Lancashire to the new processes that were destined to turn their county into a mine of gold, Greg discerned their immense importance. The vast prospects of manufacturing industry grew upon his imagination. He looked about him in search of water-power in the neighbourhood of Manchester, and at length found what he wanted a dozen miles

away at Wilmslow, over the Cheshire border. Here the stream of the Bollen cuts through a flat and uninteresting table-land, and forms a pretty valley of its own, as it winds between banks of red sandstone. When the mill was built, and a house close to it, Quarry Bank became the home of the family, and it was here that W. R. Greg passed his childhood, youth, and early manhood.

His mother was fifth in descent from Philip Henry, one of the two thousand uncompromising divines who were driven out from their benefices on that Black Bartholomew's Day of 1662, which is still commemorated by the severer Nonconformists of the old school. His son was the better known Mathew Henry, whose famous commentary on the Bible has for more than a century and a half been the favourite manual of devotional reading in half the pious households all over England and the United States. Something of the Puritan element was thus brought into the family. In Ireland the Gregs belonged to the Presbyterians of the New Light, and their doctrine allowed of a considerable relaxation in the rigours of older orthodoxy. Many, again, of the Puritans of the North of England had favoured the teachings of Priestley. The result of these two streams of influence was that the Gregs of Manchester joined the Unitarians. In this body W. R. Greg was brought up. His mother was a woman of strongly marked character. She was cultivated, and had some literary capacity of her own; she cared eagerly for the things of the mind, both for

herself and her children; and in spite of ill health and abundant cares, she persisted in strenuous effort after a high intellectual and moral standard. A little book of Maxims compiled by her still remains; and she found time to write a couple of volumes of *Practical Suggestions towards alleviating the Sufferings of the Sick.* One volume is little more than a selection of religious extracts, not likely to be more apt or useful to the sick than to the whole. The other is a discreet and homely little manual of nursing, distinguished from the common run of such books by its delicate consideration and wise counsel for the peculiar mental susceptibilities of the invalid. The collection of Maxims and Observations was designed to be 'an useful gift to her children, gleaned from her own reading and reflection.' Though not intended for publication, they found their way into a few congenial circles, and one at least of those who were educated at Dr. Carpenter's school at Bristol can remember these maxims being read aloud to the boys, and the impression that their wisdom and morality made upon his youthful mind. The literary value of the compilation is modest enough. Along with some of the best of the sayings of Chesterfield, La Rochefoucauld, Addison, and other famous masters of sentences, is much that is nearer to the level of nursery commonplace. But then these commonplaces are new truths to the young, and they are the unadorned, unseen foundations on which character is built.

The home over which this excellent woman pre-

sided offered an ideal picture of domestic felicity and worth. The grave simplicity of the household, their intellectual ways, the absence of display and even of knick-knacks, the pale blue walls, the unadorned furniture, the well-filled bookcases, the portrait of George Washington over the chimney-piece, all took people back to a taste that was formed on Mrs. Barbauld and Dr. Channing. Stanley, afterwards Bishop of Norwich, and father of the famous Dean of our own day, was rector of the adjoining parish of Alderley. Catherine Stanley, his wife, has left a charming memorial of the home of the Gregs.

Have you ever been to Quarry Bank? It is such a picture of rational, happy life. Mr. Greg is quite a gentleman; his daughters have the delightful simplicity of people who are perfectly satisfied in their place, and never trying to get out of it. He is rich, and he spends just as people do not generally spend their money, keeping a sort of open house, without pretension. If he has more guests than the old butler can manage, he has his maid-servants in to wait. He seldom goes out, except on journeys, so that with the almost certainty of finding a family party at home, a large circle of connections, and literary people, and foreigners, and Scotch and Irish, are constantly dropping in, knowing they cannot come amiss. You may imagine how this sort of life makes the whole family sit loose to all the incumbrances and hindrances of society. They actually do not know what it is to be formal or dull: each with their separate pursuits and tastes, intelligent and well-informed.

Mrs. Fletcher, again, that beautiful type of feminine character alike as maiden and mother, whose auto-

biography was given to the world a few years ago, tells how the family at Quarry Bank struck and delighted her. 'We stayed a week with them,' she says, 'and admired the cultivation of mind and refinement of manners which Mrs. Greg preserved in the midst of a money-making and somewhat unpolished community of merchants and manufacturers. Mr. Greg, too, was most gentlemanly and hospitable, and surrounded by eleven clever and well-conducted children. I thought them the happiest family group I had ever seen.'[1]

Samuel Greg was one of thirteen children, and he in his turn became the father of thirteen. W. R. Greg was the youngest of them. The brightness and sweetness of his disposition procured for him even more than the ordinary endearment of such a place in a large family. After the usual amount of schooling, first at home under the auspices of an elder sister, then at Leeds, and finally at Dr. Carpenter's at Bristol, in the winter of 1826-1827 he went to the University of Edinburgh, and remained there until the end of the session of 1828. He was a diligent student, but we may suspect, from the turn of his pursuits on leaving the university, that his mind worked most readily out of the academic groove. After the manner of most young men with an aptitude for literature, he competed for a prize poem in John Wilson's class, but he did not win. When he was in low spirits—a

[1] *Autobiography of Mrs. Fletcher*, p. 97. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1876.

mood so much more common in early manhood than we usually remember afterwards—he drove them away by energetic bursts of work. On one occasion, he says, 'When I was so bad that I thought I should have gone distracted, I shut myself up, and for three days studied all the most abstruse works that I could find on the origin of government and society, such as Godwin, Goguet, Rousseau, *et cætera*, from seven in the morning till twelve at night, which quite set me up again.' 'Natural history,' at another time he tells his sister, 'is my principal pursuit at present, and from half-past six in the morning to twelve at night I am incessantly at work, with the exception of about two hours for exercise, and two more for meals.'

Sir William Hamilton was the chief intellectual influence in Edinburgh at this time, and Greg followed his lectures with lively interest. He was still more attracted by the controversy that then raged in Edinburgh and elsewhere on the value of Phrenology and Animal Magnetism. Hamilton, as all students of contemporary philosophy are aware, denounced the pretensions of Phrenology with curious vehemence and asperity. It was the only doctrine, his friends said, that he could not even tolerate. On Animal Magnetism he held a very different opinion, and he wrote to Greg encouraging his enthusiasm in that direction. 'There has always,' he said, 'seemed to me a foundation of truth in the science, however overlaid with a superstructure of credulity and enthusiasm. . . . I foresee as great a clamour in favour of the science as

there is at present a contempt and prejudice against it, and both equally absurd.'

It was in this field, and not in literature or philosophy, that Greg's interests were most actively aroused during his university career. When his life as a student came to an end, he returned home with his whole faculties of curiosity and enthusiasm concentrated upon natural history, phrenology, and animal magnetism. 'I have a canine appetite for natural history,' he told his brother in 1828. He describes with all the zeal of a clever youth of nineteen how busily he is employed in macerating skulls, dissecting unsavoury creatures before breakfast, watching the ants reduce a viper to a skeleton for him, and striving with all his might to get a perfect collection of animal and human skulls. All this, however, was rather an accidental outbreak of exuberant intellectual activity than serious and well-directed study. He was full of the vague and morbid aspirations of youth.

As for me [he writes to his elder brother], I am pining after change, I am thirsting for excitement. When I compare what I might be with what I shall be, what I might do with what I shall do, I am ready to curse myself with vexation. 'Why had I, who am so low, a taste so high?' I know you are rather of a more peaceful and quiet temper of mind than I, but I am much mistaken if you have not much of the same desire for some kind of life more suited to man's lofty passions and his glorious destiny. How can one bear to know how much is to be seen and learned, and yet sit down content without ransacking every corner of the earth for knowledge and wonder and beauty? And after all, what is picking

a few skulls (the occupation which gives me the greatest pleasure now), when compared with gaining an intimate and practical acquaintance with all the varieties of man, all the varying phases of his character, all the peculiarities of his ever-changing situations?' [1]

We may smile at the youthful rhetoric, as the writer proceeds to describe how shameful it would be to remain inactive in the sight of exertion, to be satisfied with ignorance when in full view of the temple of knowledge, and so forth. But it is the language of a generous ardour for pure aims, and not the commoner ambition for the glittering prizes of life. This disinterested preference remained with Greg from the beginning to the end.

William Greg's truest delight at this time lay in his affectionate and happy intercourse with his brother Samuel. There were three elder brothers. One of them died comparatively young, but Robert and John were eminently successful in the affairs of life; the former of them represented Manchester; they both lived to be octogenarians, and both left behind them the beneficent traces of long years of intelligent and conscientious achievement. In Samuel Greg an interesting, clear, and earnest intelligence was united to the finest natural piety of character. Enough remains to show the impression that Samuel Greg made even on those who were not bound to him by the ties of domestic affection. The posthumous memorials of him disclose a nature moulded

[1] August 28, 1828.

of no common clay; and when he was gone, even accomplished men of the world and scholars could not recall without emotion his bright and ardent spirit, his forbearance, his humility.[1] The two brothers, says one who knew them, were 'now both of them fresh from college: their interest was alike keen in a great variety of subjects—poetry, philosophy, science, politics, social questions. About these the two brothers were never tired of talking together. They would pace up and down all the evening under the stars, and late into the night, discussing things in heaven and earth with a keen zest that seemed inexhaustible. Their appetite for knowledge was insatiable, and their outlook over the rich life that was opening before them was full of hope and promise.'

The energetic and high-minded mother of the house died at the end of 1828, and the tenderness and skill of her youngest son in the sickroom surpassed the devotion of women. In the following year he went to manage one of his father's mills at Bury, where he went to reside. The Gregs had always been distinguished for their efforts to humanise the semi-barbarous population that the extraordinary development of the cotton industry was then attracting to Lancashire. At Quarry Bank the sedulous cultivation of their own minds had always been

[1] See the little volume entitled *A Layman's Legacy;* published in 1877 (Macmillan and Co.), with a prefatory letter by the late Dean of Westminster.

subordinate to the constant and multifarious demands of their duties towards their workpeople. One of the curious features of that not very distant time was the Apprentice House. The employer procured children from the workhouse and undertook the entire charge of them. The Gregs usually had a hundred boys and girls between the ages of ten and twenty-one in their apprentice house, and the care of them was one of the main occupations of the family. They came from the refuse of the towns, yet the harmony of wise and gentle rule for the young, along with dutifully adjusted demand and compliance between the older hands and their employers, ended in the transformation of the thin, starved, half-dazed creatures who entered the gates of the factory into the best type of workpeople to be found in the district. The genial side of the patriarchal system was seen at its best. There is a touch of grace about the picture of the pleasant house with its old beech-trees and its steep grassy lawns sloping to the river, with the rhythmic hum of the mill, the loud factory bell marking the hours like the voice of time itself, the workers pouring through the garden in the summer morning on their way to Wilmslow church, and receiving flowers and friendly salutation from the group at the open door of the great house. It was little wonder that these recollections acquired a fascination for William Greg that never passed away, and gave that characteristic form to his social ideas which they never lost.

At Bury and at Quarry Bank the two brothers were unresting in their efforts both to acquire knowledge for themselves and to communicate it to their neighbours. They delivered courses of lectures, and took boundless trouble to make them interesting and instructive. In these lectures William Greg took what opportunities he could find to enforce moral and religious sentiment. 'I lay it down,' he said, 'as an indubitable fact that religion has double the effect on Saturday that it has on Sunday; and week-day morality, incidentally introduced, meets with far more attention than the tautology of Sabbath subjects, treated in the style in which they generally are by professed teachers.' A more questionable diligence displayed itself in the zealous practice of experiments in animal magnetism and mesmerism. With a faith that might have moved mountains the two brothers laid their hands upon all sorts of sick folk, and they believed themselves to have wrought many cures and wonders. William Greg described animal magnetism as a 'discovery bearing more immediately and extensively on the physical happiness of the world than any which the last three centuries have witnessed.' The cowardice of doctors and others, who believed but were afraid to speak, stirred all the generous fire of youth. 'Here, of itself,' he cries out to his sister (September 4, 1829), 'is a bitter satire upon human nature, and a sufficient answer to all who moralise on the impropriety of flying in the face of received opinions and public

prejudice. I assure you it is a knowledge of how often the ridicule and contempt of the world has crushed truth in the embryo or stifled it in the cradle, which makes me so eager to examine and support those opinions which mankind generally condemn as visionary and irrational.' In later times these interests became a bond between W. R. Greg and Miss Martineau. He finally let the subject drop, with the conviction that years of practice had brought it no farther on its way either to scientific rank or to practical fruitfulness. The time would have been better spent in severer studies, though these were not absent. From Green Bank he writes to his sister in 1830:—

Sam and I are at present engaged in some calculations on population, which have brought us to a very curious, beautiful, and important conclusion hitherto overlooked by all writers on the subject whom I have consulted, and which threatens to invalidate a considerable part of Malthus's theory. It respects the increase or diminution of fecundity; but I will write you more fully when we have quite established our facts. I have just finished a number of very tedious tables, all of which confirm our conclusions in a manner I had not ventured to anticipate . . .

I am now (September 3, 1830) very busy reading and arranging and meditating for my lectures on history, which will be ten times the labour of my last; also collecting from all history and all science every fact, or principle, or opinion, or admission, or event, which can in any way bear upon magnetism, or suggest any argument for its correctness, whereby I have amassed a profusion of ancient and modern learning, which I think will astonish the natives when I bring it forward.

My other occupations at present are reading through the best authors and orators of our country—to get a perfect command of language and style—as Hooker, Taylor, Burke, Canning, Erskine, Fox, etc., after which I shall take to French literature, and make myself as well acquainted with Voltaire, Molière, Bossuet, Massillon, Fléchier, and Condorcet, as I am with Mdme. de Staël and Rousseau and Montesquieu and Volney. This will be work enough for another year; and what fit may then come upon me, it is impossible to see. My views on population are confirmed by every fresh calculation I see, and Sadler's new work affords me the means of controverting his theory and establishing my own. The moral, physical, and political influence of manufactures and Poor Laws I must next examine.

A little later he writes:—

Everything bears indications of some approaching struggle between the higher and lower classes, and the guilt of it, if it does come, will lie at the door of those who, by their inflammatory speeches, public and private, and by their constant and monotonous complaints, have raised among the people a universal spirit of rebellion and disaffection to everything and everybody whom Nature has ordained to rule over them. We are all waiting in some alarm and much indignation for the result, and in the meantime (*entre nous*) I have written a small pamphlet, addressed to the higher classes on the present state of public feeling among the lower, urging them to moderate and direct it if they can. But sooner than the present state of things should continue, I would adopt any principles, conceiving it to be the duty of all men, as Burke says, 'so to be patriots as not to forget that we are gentlemen, to mould our principles to our duties and our situations, and to be convinced that all (public) virtue which is impracticable is spurious.' I

write to induce the people to leave politics to wiser heads, to consent to learn and not endeavour to direct or teach.

We here see that before he was one-and-twenty years old, Greg was possessed by the conception that haunted him to the very end. When the people complain, their complaint savours of rebellion. Those who make themselves the mouthpieces of popular complaint must be wicked incendiaries. The privileged classes must be ordained by Nature to rule over the non-privileged. The few ought to direct and teach, the many to learn. That was Greg's theory of government from first to last. It was derived at this time, I suppose, from Burke, without the powerful correctives and indispensable supplements that are to be found in Burke's earlier writings. Some one said of De Tocqueville, who afterwards became Mr. Greg's friend, and who showed in a milder form the same fear of democracy, 'Il a commencé à penser avant d'avoir rien appris; ce qui fait qu'il a quelquefois pensé creux.' What is to be said for Mr. Greg, now and always, is that he most honourably accepted the obligations of his doctrine, and did his best to discharge his own duties as a member of the directing class.

He did not escape moods of reaction. The truth seems to be, that though his life was always well filled, he inherited rather the easy and buoyant disposition of his father than the energy and strenuousness of his mother, though he too could be energetic and strenuous enough upon occasion. Both William Greg

and his favourite brother were of what is called, with doubtful fitness, the feminine temperament. It was much less true of William than of Samuel Greg; but it was in some degree true of him also that, though firm, tenacious, and infinitely patient, 'he rather lacked that harder and tougher fibre, both of mind and frame, which makes the battle of life so easy and so successful to many men.' It may be suspected in both cases that their excessive and prolonged devotion to the practice of mesmerism and animal magnetism had tended to relax rather than to brace the natural fibre. Samuel Greg broke down at a comparatively early age; and though his brother's more vigorous system showed no evil results for many long years to come, there was a severe reaction from the nervous tension of their mesmeric experimentation.

Those who trace despondent speculations of the mind to depressed or morbid conditions of body will find some support for their thesis in Mr. Greg's case. When he was only one-and-twenty he writes to his sister (December 2, 1830):—

> I am again attacked with one of those fits of melancholy indifference to everything, and total incapacity for exertion, to which I am so often subject, and which are indeed the chronic malady of my existence. They sometimes last for many weeks, and during their continuance I do not believe, among those whose external circumstances are comfortable, there exists any one more thoroughly miserable: . . . For nearly four years these fits of melancholy and depression have been my periodical torment, and as yet I have found no remedy against them, except strong

stimulants or the society of intimate friends, and even these are only temporary, and the latter seldom within my reach, and the former I abstain from partly on principle, but more from a fear of consequences. Every one has a thorn in the flesh, and this is mine; but I am egotistical, if not selfish, in inflicting it upon others. I begin to think I have mistaken my way both to my own happiness and the affections of others. My strongest passion has always been the desire to be loved—as the French call it, 'le besoin d'être aimé.' It is the great wish, want, desire, necessity, desideratum of my life, the source through which I expect happiness to flow to me, the ultimate aim and object which has led me on in all the little I have done, and the much that I have tried to do.

From these broodings the young man was rescued by a year of travel. It was one of the elements in the domestic scheme of education that the university should be followed by a year abroad, and in William Greg's case it had been postponed for a season by the exigences of business and the factory at Bury. He went first through France and Switzerland to Italy. At Florence he steeped himself in Italian, and read Beccaria and Machiavelli; but he had no dæmonic passion (like Macaulay's) for literature. 'Italian,' he said, 'is a wonderfully poor literature in everything but poetry, and the poets I am not up to, and I do not think that I shall take the trouble to study them.' When he reached that city which usually excites a traveller as no other city on earth can excite him, dyspepsia, neuralgia, and vapours plunged him into bad spirits, and prevented him from enjoying either

Rome or his books. The sights of Rome were very different fifty years ago from those that instruct and fascinate us to-day. Except the Colosseum, the Pantheon, and a few pillars covered thick with the filth of the modern city, the traveller found the ancient Rome an undistinguishable heap of bricks. Still, when we reflect on the profound and undying impression that Rome even then had made on such men as Goethe, or Winckelmann, or Byron, the shortcoming must have been partly in the traveller. In truth, Mr. Greg was not readily stirred either by Goethe's high artistic sense, or by Byron's romantic sense of the vast pathos of Rome.

I pass my time here [he says] with extreme regularity and quietness, not knowing, even to speak to, a single individual in Rome; and the direction to my valet when I start on my perambulations, 'al Campidoglio,' 'al Foro,' forms the largest part of my daily utterances. . . . In a fit of desperation I took to writing a kind of political philosophy, in default of my poetical aim, which is quite gone from me. It is a setting forth of the peculiar political and religious features of the age, wherein it differs from all preceding ones, and is entitled the *Genius of the Nineteenth Century*. I do not know if I shall ever finish it; but if I could write it as I have imagined it, it will at least be entitled to come under Mr. Godwin's definition of eloquence. That gentleman being in a company of literati, who were comparing their notions of what eloquence could be defined to consist in, when his opinion was asked replied, 'Eloquence is truth spoken with fervour.' I am going on with it, though slowly, and fill up the rest of my leisure time with Dante and Machiavelli (with which last author I am delighted) in the morning, and

with Boccaccio and our English poets in the evening. Sight-seeing does not occupy much of my time.[1]

From Rome Mr. Greg and a companion went to Naples, and from Naples they made their way to Sicily. I have said that Mr. Greg had not Byron's historic sense; still this was the Byronic era, and no one felt its influence more fervently. From youth to the end of his life, through good and evil repute, Mr. Greg maintained Byron's supremacy among poets of the modern time. It was no wonder, then, that he should write home to his friends,—'I am tired of civilised Europe, and I want to see a *wild* country if I can.' Accordingly at Naples he made up his mind to undertake what would be a very adventurous tour even in our day, travelling through Greece and Asia Minor to Constantinople, and thence northwards through Hungary to Vienna. This wild and hazardous part of his tour gave him a refreshment and pleasure that he had not found in Swiss landscapes or Italian cities, and he enjoyed the excitement of the 'wild countries' as thoroughly as he had expected. On his return to England he published anonymously an account of what he had seen in Greece and Turkey, in a volume which, if occasionally florid and imaginative, is still a lively and copious piece of description. It is even now worth turning to for a picture of the ruin and distraction of Greece after the final expulsion of the Turk.[2]

[1] November 30, 1831.

[2] *Sketches in Greece and Turkey, with the Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Turkish Empire.* London: Ridgway, 1833.

On his return he found the country in the throes of the great election after the Reform Bill. Perhaps his experiences of the sovereign Demos on that occasion helped to colour his opinions on popular government afterwards.

December 5, 1832.—On Tuesday we nominated—there was a fearful crowd of 10,000 ruffians, Grundy's friends from the country. A tremendous uproar. I seconded Mr. Walker's nomination, but was received with yells and groans, owing chiefly to the prosecution which I have instituted against the other candidate and four of his supporters for intimidation of voters. The ruffians roared at me like so many bulls of Bashan, and shook their fists at me, whereupon I bowed profoundly; and, finding it impossible to obtain a hearing, I turned to the opposite candidate and his immediate supporters on the hustings and spoke to them. When we concluded, the uproar was fearful. I was warned to escape as I could, which I did, amid groans and hisses, but no violence. The next morning we started polling. I had the honour of giving the first vote, and at four o'clock the poll was decided in our favour—Walker, 301; Grundy, 151. The next day I returned from Manchester, and had not been in the mill two hours before I was summoned to assist in quelling a riot. I rode down immediately with three other gentlemen and a magistrate to the scene of faction. We found plenty of broken windows and heads, but no one killed. Here were two parties of such bludgeon men as I never before witnessed, evidently bent on mischief. We read the Riot Act—sent for the military and the Haslams! I rode among the ruffians. They were in a state of extreme exasperation, especially against me, but listened to my exhortations, and after shaking their bludgeons at me, came at last to shake hands. About dusk I received several hints to take care of myself, so rode back to Green

Bank, and lay with my blunderbuss and sword, ready to give entertainment to any visitor.

It is little wonder that in a man of his literary temperament and predispositions a strong reaction followed close behind these energetic performances.

Do you know [he writes, December 29], I am sick of public life. I mean sicker than ever. The reward, or rather success, is so very inadequate to the sacrifice; and the exertion, and the injury to one's character, mentally, morally, and religiously, is so great, and one's real happiness suffers yet more. My love for retirement and the country, scientific studies, and calm, quiet, and refreshing society, such as the country only can afford, which has always been a sort of passion, is now urging me more strongly and imperiously than ever, to weigh conflicting interests and tastes, and to hold fast that which is good. And is it not far better to retire in the full vigour of life, when the energy of application is still unimpaired, and can be usefully directed?

In 1833 Mr. Greg started in business on his own account at Bury. He inherited his father's mechanical taste, and took a lively interest in the improvements that were constantly being made in those years in the wonderful machinery of the cotton manufacture. With his workpeople his relations were the most friendly, and he was as active as he had ever been before in trying to better their condition. A wider field was open for his philanthropic energies. Lancashire was then the scene of diligent social efforts of all kinds. Mr. Greg was an energetic member of the circle at Manchester (Richard Cobden was another)

which at this time pushed on educational, sanitary, and political improvements all over that important district. He fully shared the new spirit of independence and self-assertion that began to animate the commercial and manufacturing classes in the north of England at the time of the Reform Bill. It took a still more definite and resolute shape in the great struggle ten years later for the repeal of the Corn Laws. 'It is among these classes,' he said, in a speech in 1841, 'that the onward movements of society have generally had their origin. It is among them that new discoveries in political and moral science have invariably found the readiest acceptance; and the cause of Peace, Civilisation, and sound National Morality has been more indebted to their humble but enterprising labours, than to the measures of the most sagacious statesman, or the teachings of the wisest moralist.'

In 1835 Mr. Greg married the daughter of Dr. Henry, an eminent physician in Manchester, and honourably known to the wider world of science by contributions to the chemistry of gases that were in their day both ingenious and useful. Two years after his marriage he offered himself as a candidate for the parliamentary representation of Lancaster. He was much too scrupulous for that exceedingly disreputable borough, and was beaten by a great majority. In 1841 the health of his wife made it desirable to seek a purer air than that of the factory district, and in the spring of 1842 they settled in a charming spot at

the foot of Wansfell—the hill that rises to the south-east above Ambleside, and was sung by Wordsworth in one of his latest sonnets:—

> Wansfell! this household has a favoured lot,
> Living with liberty on thee to gaze,
> To watch while morn first crowns thee with her rays;
> Or when along thy breast securely float
> Evening's angelic clouds. . . .
> When we are gone
> From every object dear to mortal sight,
> As soon we shall be, may these words attest
> How oft, to elevate our spirits, shone
> Thy visionary majesties of light,
> How in thy pensive glooms our hearts found rest.

Such a step had long been in his mind. From Naples when on the threshold of active life, he had written (February 6, 1832):—

> I am becoming more and more anxious to realise a competence speedily, every time I look to the future, and reflect on the true objects of life, and the likeliest means of procuring them. I am desirous to be able to realise the projects I have formed before the age of feeling and acting be past, and before the energy of youth has been evaporated by long repression. Life and talents and desires were not given me to be wasted in a situation where the power of doing good is at best very limited, and where that of acquiring the higher kinds of knowledge and enjoying the best gifts of life is still more confined.

The nearer prospect of the world of business and actual contact with it made no change in the perpetual refrain.

I wonder [he writes, May 15, 1833] how long philosophy or indecision will induce to continue the dog's life I am leading here. I never open a book, but shun them as if they were poison, rise at half-past five o'clock, go to bed at ten, and toil like a galley slave all day, willy, nilly. Man labours for the meat which perisheth, and the food which satisfieth not.

The move to the Lakes, though it enriched his life with many delicious hours, and gave him leisure for thought and composition, yet seems to have led directly to commercial difficulties. At first he spent alternate weeks at Bury and at Wansfell, and for a little time he even removed to Macclesfield. But business fell by insensible degrees into the second place. Mr. Greg's temperament, moreover, was too sanguine in practical affairs, as Cobden's was; and we might almost gather from his writings that he had not that faculty of sustained attention to details which is the pith and marrow of success in such a business as his. At last the crash came in 1850. Three years before this the health of his brother Samuel had broken down, and William Greg added the management of his affairs to his own. The strain was too great, and a long struggle ended in defeat. Both mills were closed, and the forty thousand pounds of capital with which Mr. Greg had begun business were almost entirely swept away. At the age of forty-one he was called upon to begin life afresh. The elasticity of his mind proved equal to all the demands upon it, and they were severe. The illness

of his wife cast the shadow of a terrible cloud over his house, and for long periods it was deprived of a mother, and he of a companion. Yet amid these sore anxieties and heavy depressions he never lost either his fortitude or, what is much rarer than fortitude, that delicate and watchful consideration for others which is one of the most endearing of human characteristics. When he was twenty years younger, he had written of himself to one of his sisters (January 14, 1830):—

> Nature never cut me out for a happy man, for my mind is so constituted as to create difficulties and sorrows where I do not find them, and to strive with and overcome them when I meet them. I am never so happy as in times of difficulty and danger and excitement, and I am afraid my line of life will furnish me with but few of these times, so that I shall remain in the ground like the seed of a strong plant, which has never found the soil or the atmosphere necessary for its germination.

The judgment was not an unjust one, and the apprehension that life would bring too few difficulties was superfluous, as most of us find it to be. When the difficulties came, he confronted them with patient stoicism. His passionate love of natural beauty was solace and nourishment to him during the fifteen years of his sojourn in that taking, happy region of silver lake and green mountain slope. He had many congenial neighbours. Of Wordsworth he saw little. The poet was, in external manner and habit, too much of the peasant for Greg's intellectual fastidiousness. He called on one occasion at Rydal Mount,

and Wordsworth, who had been regravelling his little garden-walks, would talk of nothing but gravel, its various qualities, and their respective virtues. The fine and subtle understanding of Hartley Coleridge, his lively fancy, his literature, his easy play of mind, made him a more sympathetic companion for a man of letters than his great neighbour. Of him Mr. Greg saw a good deal until his death in 1849.[1] Southey was still lingering at Greta Hall; but it was death in life. He cherished and fondled the books in his beloved library as if they had been children, and moved mechanically to and fro in that mournful 'dream from which the sufferer can neither wake nor be awakened.' Southey's example might, perhaps, have been a warning to the new-comer how difficult it is to preserve a clear, healthy, and serviceable faculty of thinking about public affairs, without close and constant contact with those who are taking the lead in them.[2] There was a lesson for the

[1] Hartley Coleridge must, in Mr. Greg's case, have overcome one of his prepossessions. 'I don't like cotton manufacturers much, nor merchants over much. Cobden seems to be a good kind of fellow, but I wish he were not a cotton-spinner. I rather respect him. I'm always on the side of the poor.'

[2] I do not forget the interesting passage in Mill's *Autobiography* (pp. 262, 263), where he contends that 'by means of the regular receipt of newspapers and periodicals, a political writer, who lives many hundreds of miles from the chief seat of the politics of his country, is kept *au courant* of even the most temporary politics, and is able to acquire a more correct view of the state and progress of opinion than he could acquire by personal contact with individuals.'

Cassandra of a later day in the picture of Southey when Mrs. Fletcher took tea with him in 1833.

> I never saw any one [she said] whose mind was in so morbid a state as that of this excellent poet and amiable man on the subject of the present political aspect of affairs in England. He is utterly despondng. He believes the downfall of the Church and the subversion of all law and government is at hand; for in spite of all our endeavours to steer clear of politics, he slid unconsciously into the subject, and proclaimed his belief that the ruin of all that was sacred and venerable was impending.[1]

The condition, say of Bury, in Lancashire, at that time, contrasted with its condition to-day, is the adequate answer to these dreary vaticinations.

One resident of the Lake District was as energetic and hopeful as Southey was despondent. This was Harriet Martineau, whom Mr. Greg first introduced to the captivating beauty of Westmoreland, and whom he induced in 1850 to settle there. Other friends—the Speddings, the Arnolds at Fox How, the Davys at Ambleside, the Fletchers at Lancrigg—formed a delightful circle, all within tolerably easy reach, and affording a haven of kind and nourishing companionship. But, for a thinker upon the practical aspects of political and social science, it was all too far from—

> Labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar.

For during these years Mr. Greg did not handle merely the abstract principles of politics and sociology.

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 214.

A very scanty livelihood would have come by that way. He discussed the men, measures, and events of the day; and most of what strikes one as unsatisfactory in the discussion is probably due to a want of that close observation of facts which was hardly possible to a student on the shores of Windermere. On the other hand, it is still more certain that it was in these meditative scenes that the germs were ripened of those grave, ingenious, and affecting speculations which afterwards came to their full growth in the *Enigmas of Life*—to most of us by so much the most interesting of all its author's performances. His note-book shows that the thoughts that are suggested in this short but important volume were springing up in his mind for years, and that it touches the problems that were most constantly present to him in his best moments. It was during his residence at Windermere that he worked out and published (1851) his memorable book on the *Creed of Christendom*. It is enough here to remind ourselves how serious a place is held by that work in the dissolvent literature of the generation. The present writer was at Oxford in the last three years of the decade in which it appeared, and can well recall the share that it had, along with Mansel's *Bampton Lectures* and other books on both sides, in shaking the fabric of early beliefs in some of the most active minds then in the University. The landmarks have so shifted within the last twenty years that the *Creed of Christendom* is now comparatively orthodox.

But in those days it was a remarkable proof of intellectual courage and independence to venture on introducing to the English public the best results of German theological criticism, with fresh applications from an original mind. Since then the floods have broken loose. One may add that Mr. Greg's speculations show, as Hume and smaller men than Hume had shown before, how easily scepticism in theology allies itself with the fastidious and aristocratic sentiment in politics.

As was to be expected under the circumstances, much of Mr. Greg's time was given to merely fugitive articles on books or groups of passing events. Even the slightest of them, so far as they are known to me, show conscience and work. In 1852, for example, he wrote no less than twelve articles for the four leading quarterlies of that date. They were, with one exception, all on political or economical subjects. 'Highland Destitution,' and 'Irish Emigration,' 'Investments for the Working Classes,' 'The Modern Exodus;'—these were not themes to be dealt with by the facile journalist, standing on one foot. Mr. Greg always showed the highest conception of the functions and the obligations of the writer who addresses the public, in however ephemeral a form, on topics of social importance. No article of his ever showed a trace either of slipshod writing or of make-believe and perfunctory thinking. To compose between four and five hundred pages like these, on a variety of grave subjects, all needing to be carefully

prepared and systematically thought out, was no inconsiderable piece of work for a single pen. The strain was severe, for there was insufficient stimulus from outside, and insufficient refreshment within his own home. Long days of study were followed by solitary evening walks on the heights, or lonely sailing on the lake. In time, visits to London became more frequent, and he got closer to the world. Once a year he went to Paris, and he paid more than one visit to De Tocqueville at his home in Normandy. I remember that he told me once how surprised and disappointed he was by the indifference of public men, even the giants like Peel, to anything like general views and abstract principles of politics or society. They listened to such views with reasonable interest, but only as matters lying quite apart from their own business in the world. The statesman who pleased him best, and with whom he found most common ground, was Sir George Cornewall Lewis.

Like most men of letters who happen to be blessed or cursed with a prudential conscience, Mr. Greg was haunted by the uncertainty of his vocation. He dreaded, as he expressed it, 'to depend on so precarious a thing as a brain always in thinking order.' In every other profession there is much that can be done by deputy, or that does itself, or is little more than routine and the mechanical. In letters alone, if the brain be not in working order, all is lost. In 1856 Sir Cornewall Lewis, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer, offered Greg a place on the Board of

Customs, and he accepted it. Yet, as he said, he did so 'with some loathing and great misgiving.' Five years earlier he would have entered upon it with eagerness, but in five years he was conscious of having made 'sad progress in that philosophy whose root is idleness, indulged freedom, and increasing years.' To James Spedding he wrote on the 24th of May 1856:—

My position every one but myself seems to think most enviable. *I* contrast Lower Thames Street with The Craig, and my heart sinks into my shoes. The attendance is onerous; the actual work is not. It seems to be a place wherein a man may grow old comfortably. There is a good salary (nominally £1200), and a liberal retiring allowance when you are worked out. A board every day—except for two months' holiday, varied only by occasional tours of inspection—sounds horrible slavery to a man accustomed to wander at his own free will; and finally, at my time of my life, I have an indefinable dislike to anything involving a total change of life and habits. *En revanche*, I have a provision for old age and for my family, and shall be almost as glad to be spared the necessity of writing for bread—for butter at least—as sorry to be tied out from scribbling when and where the spirit moves me.

My last quarter's labours are an article on America in the *National*, and on Montalembert in the *Edinburgh*, and one on Macaulay in the *North Briton*, of which I am *not* proud. Froude's History I have not yet seen. I hope now, as I write less, I shall have more time for reading. It seems to be somewhat paradoxical. By the way, is not Carlyle sadly gone off? I met him the other day, and he did nothing but blaspheme, and pour out a torrent of bad language against blackguards, fools, and devils that was appalling to listen to.

On the whole, when the time came, his new employment brought him moderate interests of its own. What may be called the literary part of the work, such as the drawing up of reports, naturally fell into his hands. The necessity of working with other people, which does not always come easily to men accustomed to the isolation and independence of their own libraries, he found an agreeable novelty. Still he was not sorry when, at the end of 1864, the chance came to him of a move to the Stationery Office. Here he was the head of a department, and not merely a member of a Board, and the regulation of his hours fell more into his own hands.

From the time when he came to London, until his death five and twenty years later (November 1881), his life was for the most part without any incident in which the world can have an interest. He formed many acquaintances according to the cheerful and hospitable fashion of London, and he made a number of warm and attached friends. In 1873 his wife died. In the following year he married a daughter of Mr. James Wilson, well known as the fellow-worker of Cobden and Bright in the agitation against the Corn Laws, and as Finance Minister in India, where he sank under the cares of his office in 1860. Mr. Wilson had been Greg's intimate friend from the days of the League down to the time of his death. When by and by Mr. Greg retired from his post as Controller (1877), he wrote:—

For myself, since I gave up office, I feel comparatively and indeed positively in haven and peace, and with much and rather unusual brightness and sunshine round me, and with my interest in the world, both speculative and practical, quite undiminished, and finding old age on the whole cheerful and quiet, and the position of a *spectator* by no means an unenviable one.

This was his attitude to the end. A heavy shock fell upon him in the death of his brother-in-law, Walter Bagehot (1877), that brilliant original, well known to so many of us, who saw events and books and men with so curious an eye.

He was quite a unique man [Mr. Greg wrote to Lady Derby], as irreplaceable in private life as he is universally felt to be in public. He had the soundest head I ever knew since Cornewall Lewis left us, curiously original, yet without the faintest taint of crotchetiness, or prejudice, or passion, which so generally mars originality. Then he was high-minded, and a gentleman to the backbone; the man of all I knew, both mentally and morally, best *worth talking things over with;* and I was besides deeply attached to him personally. We had been intimates and *collaborateurs* in many lines for twenty-five years; so that altogether there is a great piece gone out of my daily life, and a great stay also—the greatest, in fact. There is no man living who was, taken all in all, so much of me.

There is a pensive grace about one of his last letters to the widow of the favourite brother of earlier days:—

I cannot let Christmas pass, dear Mary, without sending you a word of love and greeting from us both, to all of you of both generations. It cannot be a "merry"

Christmas for any of us exactly; there is so much around that is anxious and sad, and indeed almost gloomy, and life is passing away to our juniors. But we have still much to make us thankful and even happy; and, as a whole, life to those whom it concerns, much more than to us, to most of them at least, is reasonably cheerful. At least they are young and vigorous, and have pluck to face the battle of years to come. We have little to do now but watch and sympathise, and give what little help we can.

Greg's own departure was not much longer deferred. He died in November 1881.

He was not one of the fortunate beings who can draw on a spontaneous and inexhaustible fund of geniality and high spirits. He had a craving both for stimulation and for sympathy. Hence he belonged to those who are always happier in the society of women than of men. In his case this choice was not due, as it so often is, to a love of procuring deference cheaply. It was not deference that he sought, but a sympathy that he could make sure of, and that put him at his ease. Nobody that ever lived was less of a pedant, academic don, or loud Sir Oracle. He was easy to live with, a gay and appreciative companion, and the most amiable of friends, but nothing was further from his thoughts than to pose as guide and philosopher. His conversation was particularly neat and pointed. He had a lucidity of phrase such as is more common in French society than among ourselves. The vice of small talk and

the sin of prosing he was equally free from; and if he did not happen to be interested, he had a great gift of silence.

The grace of humility is one of the supreme moral attractions in a man. Its outward signs are not always directly discernible; and it may exist underneath marked intrepidity, confidence in one's own judgment, and even a strenuous push for the honours of the world. But without humility, no veracity. There is a genuine touch of it in a letter which Greg wrote to a friend who had consented to be the guardian of his children:—

> I have no directions as to their education to give. I have too strong a sense of the value of religion myself, not to wish that my children should have so much of it (I speak of feeling, not of creed) as is compatible with reason. I have no ambition for them, and can only further say in the dying words of Julie, 'N'en faites point des savans—faites-en des hommes bienfaisans et justes.' If they are this, they will be more than their father ever was, and all he ever desired to be.

This sentiment of the unprofitable servant was deep in his nature—as it may well be in all who are not either blinded by inborn fatuity, or condemned by natural poverty of mind to low and gross ideals.

Though he took great delight in the enchanted land of pure literature, apart from all utility, yet he was of those, the fibres of whose nature makes it impossible for them to find real intellectual interest

outside of what is of actual and present concern to their fellows. Composition, again, had to him none of the pain and travail that it brings to most writers. The expression came with the thought. His ideas were never vague, and needed no laborious translation. Along with them came apt words and the finished sentence. Yet his fluency never ran off into the fatal channels of verbosity. Ease, clearness, precision, and a certain smooth and sure-paced consecutiveness, made his written style for all purposes of statement and exposition one of the most telling and effective of his day. This gift of expression helped him always to appear intellectually at his best. It really came from a complete grasp of his own side of the case, and that always produces the best style next after a complete grasp of both sides. Few men go into the troubled region of pamphleteering, article-writing, public controversy, and incessant dialectics, without suffering a deterioration of character in consequence. Mr. Greg must be set down as one of these few. He never fell into the habitual disputant's vice of trying to elude the force of a fair argument; he did not mix up his own personality in the defence of his thesis; differences in argument and opinion produced not only no rancour, but even no soreness.

The epicurean element was undoubtedly strong in him. He liked pleasant gardens; set a high value on leisure and even vacuity; did not disdain novels; and had the sense to prefer good wine to bad. When he travelled in later life he showed none of the over-praised

desire to acquire information for information's sake. While his companions were 'getting up' the Pyramids, or antiquities in the Troad, or the great tomb of Alyattis, Mr. Greg refused to take any trouble to form views, or to pretend to find a sure footing among the shifting sands of archæological or pre-historic research. He chose to lie quietly among the ruins, and let the beauty and wonder of the ancient world float silently about him. For this poetic indolence he had a great faculty. To a younger friend whom he suspected of unwholesome excess of strenuousness, he once propounded this test of mental health: 'Could you sit for a whole day on the banks of a stream, doing nothing and thinking of nothing, only throwing stones into the water?'

The ascetic view of things was wholly distasteful to him. He had a simple way of taking what was bright and enjoyable in life, refusing to allow anything but very distinct duty to interfere with the prompt acceptance of the gifts of the gods. Yet, as very seldom happens in natures thus composed, he was before all things unselfish. That is to say, he struck those who knew him best as less of a centre to himself than most other people are. Though thoroughly capable of strong and persistent wishes, and as far as possible from having a character of faint outlines and pale colours, it came to him quite naturally and without an effort to think of those for whom he cared, and of himself not at all. There was something of the child of nature in him. Though nobody

liked the fruits of cultivated life better—order, neatness, and grace in all daily things—yet nobody was more ready to make short work of conventionalities that might thrust shadows between him or others and the substance of happiness.

It would be difficult for me here to examine Mr. Greg's writings with perfect freedom and appropriateness. The man rather than the author has prompted this short sketch. His books tell their own story. There is not one of them that does not abound in suggestion both in politics and in subjects where there is more room for free meditation and the subtler qualities of mind than politics can ever afford. Mr. Greg is not one of the thinkers whom we can place in any school, still less in any party. It may be safely said of him that he never took up an idea or an opinion, as most writers even of high repute are not afraid of doing, simply because it was proffered to him, or because it was held by others with whom in a general way he was disposed to agree. He did not even shrink from what looked like self-contradiction, so honest was his feeling for truth, and so little faith had he in the infallibility of sect and the trustworthiness of system. In the *Enigmas of Life* (1875) there is much that is hard to reconcile with his own fundamental theology, and he was quite aware of it. He was content with the thought that he had found fragments of true ore. Hence the extraordinary difficulty of classifying him. One would be inclined to place him as a Theist, yet can we give any other

name but Agnostic to a man who speaks in such terms as these?—

I cannot for a moment *not* believe in a Supreme Being, and I cannot for a moment doubt that His arrangement must be right and wise and benevolent. But I cannot also for a moment feel confident in any doctrines or opinions I could form on this great question.[1]

The same impossibility of classification meets us in his politics. He was certainly, in a philosophic sense, a Conservative; he was anti-popular and anti-democratic. Yet he was an ardent champion of the popular and democratic principle of Nationalities; he was all for the Greeks and Bulgarians against the Turks, and all for the Hungarians and Italians against the Austrians.[2] Nor had he any sympathy with the old ordering of society as such. He had no zeal, as far as one can see, for an hereditary peerage and an established church. He threw himself into the memorable battle of the Reform Bill of 1832 with characteristic spirit and energy. His ideal, like that of most literary thinkers on politics, was an aristocracy, not of caste, but of education, virtue, and public spirit. It was the old dream of lofty minds from Plato down to Turgot. Every page of Greg's political writing is coloured by this attractive vision. Though as anxious

[1] To the Rev. E. White.

[2] 'When the Hungarian exiles were in England,' writes Professor F. W. Newman, 'he was not too rich, nor had I any close relations with him, but he voluntarily gave me ten pounds for any service to them which I judged best.'

as any politician of his time for practical improvements, and as liberal in his conception of their scope and possibility, he insisted that they could only be brought about by an aristocracy of intellect and virtue.[1] But then the great controversy turns on the best means of securing sense and probity in a government. The democrat holds that under representative institutions the best security for the interests of the mass of the community is, that the mass shall have a voice in their own affairs, and that in proportion as that security is narrowed and weakened, the interests of the mass will be subordinate to those of the class that has a decisive voice. Mr. Greg had no faith in the good issues of this rough and spontaneous play of social forces. The extension of the suffrage in 1867 seemed to him to be the ruin of representative institutions; and when that was capped by the Ballot in 1872, the cup of his dismay was full. Perhaps, he went on to say, some degree of safety might be found by introducing the Ballot inside the House of Commons. De Tocqueville wrote Mr. Greg a long and interesting letter in 1853, which is well worth reading to-day in connection with *scrutin de liste* and the Ballot.[2] De Tocqueville was for both. He was, as has been said, 'an aristocrat who accepted his defeat,' and he tried to make the best of democracy. Greg fought against the enemy to the last, and clung

[1] See his two volumes of reprinted articles, *Essays on Political and Social Science* (1853).

[2] *Correspondence*, vol. ii. pp. 212-220.

to every device for keeping out the deluge. He could not get on to common ground with those who believe that education is no sort of guarantee for political competency; that no class, however wise and good, can be safely trusted with the interests of other classes; and finally, that great social and economic currents cannot be checked or even guided by select political oligarchies, on whatever base any such oligarchy may rest.

Lord Grey's prescription for correcting the practical faults revealed by experience in our present system of representation, consisted of the following ingredients:—the cumulative vote; not fewer than three seats to each constituency; universities and some other constituencies, necessarily consisting of educated men, to have increased representation; a limited number of life members to be introduced into the House of Commons, the vacancies to be filled, when not less than three had occurred, by cumulative vote within the House itself. On all this Mr. Greg wrote to Lord Grey (May 28, 1874): 'I quite agree with you that this impending danger we both foresee might be averted, if our country would listen either to you or to me.'

Tenderness for these truly idle devices for keeping power in the hands of a restricted class was all the less to be expected in Mr. Greg, as he had made a serious study of French politics prior to 1848. Now the Monarchy of July maintained a narrow and exclusive franchise, and its greatest minister was the

very type of the class from whom Mr. Greg would have sought the directors of national affairs. If ever there was a statesman who approached the fulfilment of Mr. Greg's conditions, it was Guizot. Guizot had undergone years of patient historic study; nobody of his time had reflected more carefully on the causes and forces of great movements; he had more of what is called the calm philosophic mind, than any one then eminent in literature; he overflowed with what Mr. Greg describes as the highest kind of wisdom; his moral pretensions were austere, lofty, and unbending to a fault. No man of any time would seem to have been better entitled to a place among the Wise and the Good whom nations ought to seek out to rule over them. Yet this great man was one of the very worst statesmen that ever governed France. The severe morality of the student was cast behind him by the minister. He did not even shrink from defending, from considerations of political convenience, the malversations of a colleague. The pattern of wisdom and goodness devised and executed a cynical and vile intrigue, from which Sir Robert Walpole would have shrunk with masculine disgust, and that would have raised scruples in Dubois or Calonne. Finally, this famous professor of political science possessed so little skill in political practice, that a few years of his policy wrecked a constitution and brought a dynasty to the ground.

All these political regrets and doubts, however, cannot lessen or affect our interest in those ingenious,

subtle, and delicate speculations which Mr. Greg called *Enigmas of Life*. Though his *Creed of Christendom* may have made a more definite and recognisable mark, the later book rapidly fell in with the needs of many minds, stirred much controversy of a useful and harmonious kind, and attracted serious curiosity to a wider variety of problems. It is at this moment in its fifteenth edition. The chapters on Malthus and on the Non-Survival of the Fittest make a very genuine and original contribution to modern thought. But it is the later essays in the little volume that touched most readers, and will for long continue to touch them. They are as far as possible from being vague, or misty, or aimless. Yet they have, what is so curiously rare in English literature, the charm of reverie. As the author said, they 'contain rather suggested thoughts that may fructify in other minds than distinct propositions which it is sought argumentatively to prove.' They have the ever seductive note of meditation and inwardness, which, when it sounds true, as it assuredly did here, moves the spirit like a divine music. There is none of the thunder of Carlyle (which, for that matter, one may easily come in time to find prodigiously useless and unedifying); there is not the piercing concentrated ray of Emerson: but the complaints, the misgivings, the aspirations of our generation find in certain pages of Mr. Greg's book a voice of mingled fervour and *recueillement*, a union of contemplative reason with spiritual sensibility, which makes them one of the best expressions

of one of the highest moods of this bewildered time. They are in the true key for religious or spiritual composition, as Rousseau's Savoyard Vicar is; thought and emotion are fused without the decorations of misplaced rhetoric. That Meditations so stamped with sincerity, and so honestly directed to the actual perplexities of thoughtful people, should have met with wide and grateful acceptance, is no more than might have been expected. Least of all can their fine qualities be underrated even by those who, like the present writer, believe that, ponder these great enigmas as we may, we shall never get beyond Goethe's majestic psalm:—

Edel sey der Mensch,
Hülfreich und gut!
Denn das allein
Unterscheidet ihn
Von allen Wesen
Die wir kennen. . . .

Denn unfühlend
Ist die Natur:
Es leuchtet die Sonne
Ueber Bös' und Gute,
Und dem Verbrecher
Glänzen, wie dem Besten,
Der Mond und die Sterne. . . .

Nach ewigen, ehrnen
Grossen Gesetzen
Müssen wir alle
Unseres Daseyns
Kreise vollenden.

Nur allein der Mensch
Vermag das Unmögliche;
Er unterscheidet
Wählet und richtet
Er kann dem Augenblick
Dauer verleihen.

FRANCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.[1]

THE announcement that one of the most ingenious and accomplished men of letters in Europe was engaged upon a history of the French Revolution, raised some doubts among those who have thought most about the qualifications proper to the historian. M. Taine has the quality of the best type of a man of letters; he has the fine critical aptitude for seizing the secret of an author's or an artist's manner, for penetrating to dominant and central ideas, for marking the abstract and general under accidental forms in which they are concealed, for connecting the achievements of literature and art with facts of society and impulses of human character and life. He is the master of a style which, if it seems to lack the breadth, the firmness, the sustained and level strength of great writing, is yet always energetic, and fresh, and alive with that spontaneous reality and independence of interest which distinguishes the genuine writer from the mere weaver of sentences and the servile mechanic of the

[1] *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine.* Tom. i. *L'Ancien Régime.* Par H. Taine. Paris: Hachette. 1876.

pen. The matter and form alike of M. Taine's best work—and we say best, for his work is by no means without degrees and inequalities of worth — prove that he has not shrunk from the toil and austerity of the student, from that scorn of delight and living of laborious days, by which only can men either get command of the art of just and finished expression, or gather to themselves much knowledge.

But with all its attractiveness and high uses of its own, the genius for literature in its proper sense is distinct from the genius for political history. The discipline is different, because the matter is different. To criticise Rousseau's Social Contract requires one set of attainments, and to judge the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly or the Convention requires a set of quite different attainments. A man may have the keenest sense of the filiation of ideas, of their scope and purport, and yet have a very dull or uninterested eye for the play of material forces, the wayward tides of great gatherings of men, the rude and awkward methods that sometimes go to the attainment of wise political ends.

It would perhaps not be too bold to lay down this proposition; that no good social history has ever been written by a man who has not either himself taken a more or less active part in public affairs, or else been an habitual intimate of persons who were taking such a part on a considerable scale. Everybody knows what Gibbon said about the advantage to the historian of the Roman Empire of having been a member of the

English parliament and a captain in the Hampshire grenadiers. Thucydides commanded an Athenian squadron, and Tacitus filled the offices of prætor and consul. Xenophon, Polybius, and Sallust, were all men of affairs and public adventure. Guicciardini was an ambassador, a ruler, and the counsellor of rulers; and Machiavel was all these things and more. Voltaire was the keen-eyed friend of the greatest princes and statesmen of his time, and was more than once engaged in diplomatic transactions. Robertson was a powerful party chief in the Assembly of the Scotch Church. Grote and Macaulay were active members of parliament, and Hallam and Milman were confidential members of circles where affairs of State were the staple of daily discussion among the men who were responsible for conducting them to successful issues. Guizot was a prime minister, Finlay was a farmer of the Greek revenue. The most learned of contemporary English historians a few years ago contested a county, and is habitually inspired in his researches into the past by his interest in the politics of the present. The German historians, whose gifts in reconstructing the past are so valuable and so singular, have for the most part been as actively interested in the public movements of to-day, as in those of any century before or since the Christian era. Niebuhr held more than one political post of dignity and importance; and of historical writers in our time, one has sat in several Prussian parliaments; another, once the tutor of a Prussian prince, has lived

in the atmosphere of high politics; while all the best of them have taken their share in the preparation of the political spirit and ideas that have restored Germany to all the fulness and exaltation of national life.

It is hardly necessary to extend the list. It is indeed plain on the least reflection that close contact with political business, however modest in its pretensions, is the best possible element in the training of any one who aspires to understand and reproduce political history. Political preparation is as necessary as literary preparation. There is no necessity that the business should be on any majestic and imperial scale. To be a guardian of the poor in an East-End parish, to be behind the scenes of some great strike of labour, to be an active member of the parliamentary committee of a Trades Council or of the executive committee of a Union or a League, may be quite as instructive discipline as participation in mightier scenes. Those who write concrete history, without ever having taken part in practical politics, are, one might say, in the position of those ancients who wrote about the human body without ever having effectively explored it by dissection. Mr. Carlyle, it is true, by force of penetrating imaginative genius, has reproduced in stirring and resplendent dithyrambs the fire and passion, the rage and tears, the many-tinted dawn and the blood-red sunset of the French Revolution; and the more a man learns about the details of the Revolution, the greater is his admiration for Mr. Carlyle's magnificent performance. But it is dramatic presenta-

tion, not social analysis; a masterpiece of literature, not a scientific investigation; a prodigy of poetic insight, not a sane and quantitative exploration of the complex processes, the deep-lying economical, fiscal, and political conditions, that prepared so immense an explosion.

We have to remember, it is true, that M. Taine is not professing to write a history in the ordinary sense. His book lies, if we may use two very pompous but indispensable words, partly in the region of historiography, but much more in the region of sociology. The study of the French Revolution cannot yet be a history of the past, for the French still walk *per ignes suppositos*, and the Revolution is still some way from being fully accomplished. It was the disputes between the Roman and the Reformed churches which inspired historical research in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; it is the disputes among French parties that now inspire what professes to be historiography, but what is really a sort of experimental investigation in the science of society. They little know how long and weary a journey lies before them, said Burke, who undertake to bring great masses of men into the political unity of a nation. The process is still going on, and a man of M. Taine's lively intellectual sensibility can no more escape its influences than he can escape the ingredients of the air he breathes. We may add that if his work had been really historic, he must inevitably have gone further back than the eighteenth century for the 'Origins' of contemporary

France. The very slight, vague, and unsubstantial chapter with which he opens his work cannot be accepted as a substitute for what the subject really demanded—a serious summary, however condensed and rapid, of the various forces, accidents, deliberate lines of policy, which, from the breaking up of the great fiefs down to the death of Lewis the Fourteenth, had prepared the distractions of the monarchy under Lewis's descendants.

Full of interest as it is, M. Taine's book can hardly be described as containing much that is new or strikingly significant. He develops one idea, indeed, which we have never before seen stated in its present form, but which, if it implies more than has been often advanced by previous writers in other forms, cannot be accepted as true. This is perhaps a point better worth discussing than any other which his book raises. The rest is a very elaborate and thorough description of the structure of society, of its physiognomy in manners and characteristics, the privileges, the burdens, the daily walk and conversation of the various classes which made up the French people between the Regency and the Revolution. M. Taine's method of description does not strike one as altogether happy. It is a common complaint against French historians that they are too lax about their authorities, and too heedless about giving us chapter and verse for their assertions. M. Taine goes to the contrary extreme, and pours his note-books into his text with a steady-handed profusion that is excessively fatiguing, and

makes the result far less effective than it would have been if all this industrious reading had been thoroughly fused and recast into a homogeneous whole. It is an ungenerous trick of criticism to disparage good work by comparing it with better; but the reader can scarcely help contrasting M. Taine's overcrowded pages with the perfect assimilation, the pithy fulness, the pregnant meditation, of De Tocqueville's book on the same subject. When we attempt to reduce M. Taine's chapters to a body of propositions standing out in definite relief from one another, yet conveying a certain unity of interpretation, we soon feel how possible it is for an author to have literary clearness along with historic obscurity.

In another respect we are inclined to question the felicity of M. Taine's method. It does not convey the impression of movement. The steps and changes in the conflict among the organs of the old society are not marked in their order and succession. The reader is not kept alive to the gradual progress of the break-up of old institutions and ideas. The sense of an active and ceaseless struggle, extending in various stages across the century, is effaced by an exclusive attention to the social details of a given phase. We need the story. You cannot effectively reproduce the true sense and significance of such an epoch as the eighteenth century in France, without telling us, however barely, the tale, for example, of the long battle of the ecclesiastical factions, and the yet more important series of battles between the judiciary and the crown. If M.

Taine's book were a piece of abstract social analysis, the above remark would not be true. But it is a study of the concrete facts of French life and society, and to make such a study effective, the element of the chronicle, as in Lacretelle or Jobez, cannot rightly be dispensed with.

Let us proceed to the chief thesis of the book. The new formula in which M. Taine describes the source of all the mischiefs of the revolutionary doctrine is this. 'When we see a man,' he says, 'who is rather weak in constitution, but apparently sound and of peaceful habits, drink eagerly of a new liquor, then suddenly fall to the ground, foaming at the mouth, delirious and convulsed, we have no hesitation in supposing that in the pleasant draught there was some dangerous ingredient; but we need a delicate analysis in order to decompose and isolate the poison. There is one in the philosophy of the eighteenth century, as curious as it was potent: for not only is it the product of a long historic elaboration, the final and condensed extract in which the whole thought of the century ends; but more than that, its two principal elements are peculiar in this, and when separated they are each of them salutary, yet in combination they produce a poisonous compound.' These two ingredients are, first, the great and important acquisitions of the eighteenth century in the domain of physical science; second, the fixed classic form of the French intelligence. 'It is the classic spirit which,

being applied to the scientific acquisitions of the time, produced the philosophy of the century and the doctrines of the Revolution.' This classic spirit has in its literary form one or two well-known marks. It leads, for instance, to the fastidious exclusion of particulars, whether in phrases, objects, or traits of character, and substitutes for them the general, the vague, the typic. Systematic arrangement orders the whole structure and composition from the period to the paragragh, from the paragraph to the structural series of paragraphs; it dictates the style as it has fixed the syntax. Its great note is the absolute. Again, 'two principal operations make up the work of the human intelligence: placed in face of things, it receives the impression of them more or less exactly, completely, and profoundly; next, leaving the things, it decomposes its impression, and classifies, distributes, and expresses more or less skilfully the ideas that it draws from that impression. In the second of these processes the classic is superior.' Classicism is only the organ of a certain reason, the *raison raisonnante;* that which insists upon thinking with as little preparation and as much ease as possible; which is contented with what it has acquired, and takes no thought about augmenting or renewing it; which either cannot or will not embrace the plenitude and the complexity of things as they are.

As an analysis of the classic spirit in French literature, nothing can be more ingenious and happy than these pages (p. 241, etc.) But, after all, classic is only the literary form preferred by a certain turn

of intelligence; and we shall do well to call that turn of intelligence by a general name, that shall comprehend not only its literary form but its operations in every other field. And accordingly at the end of this very chapter we find M. Taine driven straightway to change classic for mathematic in describing the method of the new learning. And the latter description is much better, for it goes beneath the surface of literary expression, important as that is, down to the methods of reasoning. It leads us to the root of the matter, to the deductive habits of the French thinkers. The mischief of the later speculation of the eighteenth century in France was that men argued about the complex, conditional, and relative propositions of society, as if they had been theorems and problems of Euclid. And M. Taine himself is, as we say, compelled to change his term when he comes to the actual facts and personages of the revolutionary epoch. It was the geometric, rather than the classic, quality of political reasoning, which introduced so much that we now know to have been untrue and mischievous.

Even in literary history it is surely nearer the truth to say of the latter half of the century that the revolutionary movement began with the break-up of classic form and the gradual dissolution of the classic spirit. Indeed this is such a commonplace of criticism, that we can only treat M. Taine's inversion of it as a not very happy paradox. It was in literature that this genius of innovation, which afterwards extended over the whole social structure, showed itself

first of all. Rousseau, not merely in the judgment of a foreigner like myself, but in that of the very highest of all native authorities, Sainte Beuve, effected the greatest revolution that the French tongue had undergone since Pascal. And this revolution was more remarkable for nothing than for its repudiation of nearly all the notes of classicism that are enumerated by M. Taine. Diderot, again, in every page of his work, whether he is discussing painting, manners, science, the drama, poetry, or philosophy, abounds and overabounds in those details, particularities, and special marks of the individual, which are, as M. Taine rightly says, alien to the classic genius. Both Rousseau and Diderot, considered as men of letters, were conscious literary revolutionists, before they were used as half-conscious social revolutionists. They deliberately put away from them the entire classic tradition as to the dignity of personage proper to art, and the symmetry and fixed method proper to artistic style. This was why Voltaire, who was a son of the seventeenth century before he was the patriarchal sire of the eighteenth, could never thoroughly understand the author of the New Heloisa, or the author of the Père de Famille and Jacques le Fataliste. Such work was to him for the most part a detestable compound of vulgarity and rodomontade. 'There is nothing living in the eighteenth century,' M. Taine says, 'but the little sketches that are stitched in by the way and as if they were contraband, by Voltaire, and five or six portraits like Turcaret, Gil Blas, Marianne, Manon

Lescaut, Rameau's Nephew, Figaro, two or three hasty sketches of Crebillon the younger and Collé' (p. 258). Nothing living but this! But this is much and very much. We do not pretend to compare the authors of these admirable delineations with Molière and La Bruyère in profundity of insight or in grasp and ethical mastery, but they are certainly altogether in a new vein even from those two great writers, when we speak of the familiar, the real, and the particular, as distinguished from old classic generality. And, we may add in passing, that the social life of France from the death of Lewis XIV. downwards was emancipated all round from the formality and precision of the classic time. As M. Taine himself shows in many amusing pages, life was singularly gay, free, sociable, and varied. The literature of the time was sure to reflect, and does reflect, this universal rejection of the restraints of the past age when the classic spirit had been supreme.

Apart from this kind of objection to its exact expression, let us look at the substance of M. Taine's dictum. 'It was the classic spirit, which, when applied to the scientific acquisitions of the time, produced the philosophy of the century and the doctrines of the Revolution.' Even if we substitute geometric or deductive spirit for classic spirit, the proposition remains nearly as unsatisfactory. What were the doctrines of the Revolution? The sovereignty of the people, rights of man, liberty, equality, fraternity, progress and perfectibility of the species—these were

the main articles of the new creed. M. Taine, like too many French writers, writes as if these ideas had never been heard of before '89. Yet the most important and decisive of them were at least as old as the Reformation, were not peculiarly French in any sense, and were no more the special products of the classic spirit mixing with scientific acquisitions than they were the products of Manicheanism. It is extraordinary that a writer who attributes so much importance to Rousseau, and who gives us so ample an account of his political ideas, should not have traced these ideas to their source, nor even told us that they had a source wholly outside of France. Rousseau was a Protestant; he was a native of the very capital and mother city of Protestantism, militant and democratic; and he was penetrated to his heart's core by the political ideas which had arisen in Europe at the Reformation. There is not a single principle in the Social Contract which may not be found either in Hobbes, or in Locke, or in Althusen, any more than there is a single proposition of his deism which was not in the air of Geneva when he wrote his Savoyard Vicar. If this be the case, what becomes of the position that the revolutionary philosophy was worked out by the *raison raisonnante*, which is the special faculty of a country saturated with the classic spirit? If we must have a formula, it would be nearer the truth to say that the doctrines of the Revolution were the product, not of the classic spirit applied to scientific acquisitions, but, first, of

the democratic ideas of the Protestant Reformation, and then of the fictions of the lawyers, both of them allied with certain urgent social and political necessities.

So much, then, for the political side of the 'philosophy of the century,' if we are to use this too comprehensive expression for all the products of a very complex and many-sided outburst of speculative energy. Apart from its political side, we find M. Taine's formula no less unsatisfactory for its other phases. He seems to us not to go back nearly far enough in his search for the intellectual origins, any more than for the political origins, of his contemporary France. He has taken no account of the progress of the spirit of Scepticism from Montaigne's time, nor of the decisive influence of Montaigne on the revolutionary thinkers. Yet the extraordinary excitement aroused in France by Bayle's Dictionary was a proof of the extent to which the sceptical spirit had spread before the Encyclopædists were born. The great influence of Fontenelle was wholly in the same sceptical direction. There was a strong sceptical element in French Materialism, even when materialism was fully developed and seemed most dogmatic.[1] Indeed, it may sometimes occur to the student of such a man as Diderot to wonder how far materialism in France was only seized upon as a means of making scepticism both serious and philosophic. For its turn for scepticism is at least as much a distinction of the French

[1] See Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus*, i. 298.

intelligence as its turn for classicism. And, once more, if we must have a formula, it would be best to say that the philosophy of the century was the product, first of scepticism applied to old beliefs which were no longer easily tenable, and then of scepticism extended to old institutions that were no longer practically habitable.

And this brings us to the cardinal reason for demurring to M. Taine's neatly rounded proposition. His appreciation of the speculative precursors of the Revolution seems to us to miss the decisive truth about them. He falls precisely into those errors of the *raison raisonnante*, about which, in his description of the intellectual preparation of the great overthrow, he has said so many just and acute things. Nothing can be more really admirable than M. Taine's criticism upon Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, as great masters of language (pp. 339-361). All this is marked by an amplitude of handling, a variety of approach, a subtlety of perception, a fulness of comprehension, which give a very different notion of M. Taine's critical soundness and power from any that one could have got from his account elsewhere of our English writers. Some of the remarks are open to criticism, as might be expected. It is hard to accept the saying (p. 278) that Montesquieu's 'celebrity was not an influence.' It was Montesquieu, after all, who first introduced among the Encyclopædic band a rationalistic and experiential conception of the various legal and other conditions of the social

union, as distinguished from the old theological explanation of them. The correspondence of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, D'Alembert, is sufficient to show how immediately, as well as how powerfully, they were influenced by Montesquieu's memorable book. Again, it is surely going too far to say that Montesquieu's Persian Letters contained every important idea of the century. Does it, for instance, contain that thrice fruitful idea which Turgot developed in 1750, of all the ages being linked together by an ordered succession of causes and effects? These and other objections, however, hardly affect the brilliance and substantial excellence of all this part of the book. It is when he proceeds to estimate these great men, not as writers but as social forces, not as stylists but as apostles, that M. Taine discloses the characteristic weaknesses of the bookman in dealing with the facts of concrete sociology. He shows none of this weakness in what he says of the remote past. On the contrary, he blames, as we have all blamed, Voltaire, Rousseau, and the rest of the group, for their failure to recognise that the founders of religions satisfied a profound need in those who accepted them, and that this acceptance was the spontaneous admission of its relative fitness. It would be impossible to state this important truth better than M. Taine has done in the following passage:—

'At certain critical moments in history,' he says, 'men have come out from the narrow and confined track of their daily life and seized in one wide vision

the infinite universe; the august face of eternal nature is suddenly unveiled before them; in the sublimity of their emotion they seem to perceive the very principle of its being; and at least they did discern some of its features. By an admirable stroke of circumstance, these features were precisely the only ones that their age, their race, a group of races, a fraction of humanity, happened to be in a condition to understand. Their point of view was the only one under which the multitudes beneath could place themselves. For millions of men, for hundreds of generations, the only one access to divine things was along their path. They pronounced the unique word, heroic or tender, enthusiastic or tranquillising; the only word that, around them and after them, the heart and the intelligence would consent to hearken to; the only one adapted to the deep-growing wants, the long-gathered aspirations, the hereditary faculties, a whole moral and mental structure,—here to that of the Hindu or the Mongol, there to that of the Semite or the European, in our Europe to that of the German, the Latin, or the Slav; in such a way that its very contradictions, instead of condemning it, were exactly what justified it, since its diversity produced its adaptation, and its adaptation produced its benefits' (p. 272).

It is extraordinary that a thinker who could so clearly discern the secret of the great spiritual movements of human history, should fail to perceive that the same law governs and explains all the minor

movements in which wide communities have been suddenly agitated by the word of a teacher. It is well—as no one would be more likely to contend than myself, who have attempted the task—to demonstrate the contradictions, the superficiality, the inadequateness, of the teaching of Rousseau, Voltaire, or Diderot. But it is well also, and in a historical student it is not only well, but the very pith and marrow of criticism, to search for that 'adaptation,' to use M. Taine's very proper expression, which gave to the word of these teachers its mighty power and far-spreading acceptance. Is it not as true of Rousseau and Voltaire, acting in a small society, as it is of Buddha or Mahomet acting on vast groups of races, that 'leur point de vue était le seul auquel les multitudes échelonnées au dessous d'eux pouvaient se mettre?' Did not they too seize, 'by a happy stroke of circumstance,' exactly those traits in the social union, in the resources of human nature, in its deep-seated aspirations, which their generation was in a condition to comprehend,—liberty, equality, fraternity, progress, justice, tolerance?

M. Taine shows, as so many others have shown before him, that the Social Contract, when held up in the light of true political science, is very poor stuff. Undoubtedly it is so. And Quintilian—an accomplished and ingenious Taine of the first century—would have thought the Gospels and Epistles, and Augustine and Jerome and Chrysostom, very poor stuff, compared with the—

> Mellifluous streams that watered all the schools
> Of Academics old and new, with those
> Surnamed Peripatetics, and the Sect
> Epicurean, and the Stoic severe.

And in some ways, from a literary or logical point of view, the early Christian writers could ill bear this comparison. But great bodies of men, in ages of trouble and confusion, have an instinctive feeling for the fragment of truth which they happen to need at the hour. They have a spontaneous apprehension of the formula which is at once the expression of their miseries and the mirror of their hope. The guiding force in the great changes of the world has not been the formal logic of the schools or of literature, but the practical logic of social convenience. Men take as much of a teacher's doctrine as meets their real wants: the rest they leave. The Jacobins accepted Rousseau's ideas about the sovereignty of the people, but they seasonably forgot his glorification of the state of nature and his denunciations of civilisation and progress. The American revolutionists cheerfully borrowed the doctrine that all men are born free and equal, but they kept their slaves.

It was for no lack of competition that the ideas of the Social Contract, of Raynal's History of the two Indies, of the System of Nature, of the Philosophical Dictionary, made such astounding and triumphant way in men's minds. There was Montesquieu with a sort of historic method. There was Turgot, and the school of the economists. There were seventy

thousand of the secular clergy, and sixty thousand of the regular clergy, ever proclaiming by life or exhortation ideas of peace, submission, and a kingdom not of this world. Why did men turn their backs on these and all else, and betake themselves to revolutionary ideas? How came those ideas to rise up and fill the whole air? The answer is that, with all their contradiction, shallowness, and danger, such ideas fitted the crisis. They were seized by virtue of an instinct of national self-preservation. The evil elements in them worked themselves out in infinite mischief. The true elements in them saved France, by firing men with social hope and patriotic faith.

How was it, M. Taine rightly asks, that the philosophy of the eighteenth century, which was born in England and thence sent its shoots to France, dried up in the one country, and grew to overshadow the earth in the other? Because, he answers, the new seed fell upon ground that was suited to it, the home of the classic spirit, the country of *raison raisonnante.* Compare with this merely literary solution the answer given to the same question by De Tocqueville:—'It was no accident that the philosophers of the eighteenth century generally conceived notions so opposed to those which still served as the base of the society of their time; *these ideas had actually been suggested to them by the very sight of that society, which they had ever before their eyes*' (*Ancien Régime*, 206). This is the exact truth and the whole truth. The greatest enterprise achieved by the men of letters in the period of

intellectual preparation was the Encyclopædia; and I have elsewhere tried to present what seemed to be ample evidence that the spirit and aim of that great undertaking were social, and that its conductors, while delivering their testimony in favour of the experiential conception of life in all its aspects, and while reproducing triumphantly the most recent acquisitions of science, had still the keenest and most direct eye for the abuses and injustice, the waste and disorder, of the social institutions around them. The answer, then, which we should venture to give to M. Taine's question would be much simpler than his. The philosophy of the eighteenth century fared differently in England and in France, because its ideas did not fit in with the economic and political conditions of the one, while, on the contrary, they were actively warmed and fostered by those of the other. It was not a literary aptitude in the nation for *raison raisonnante*, which developed the political theories of Rousseau, the moral and psychological theories of Diderot, the anti-ecclesiastical theories of Voltaire and Holbach. It was the profound disorganisation of institutions that suggested and stimulated the speculative agitation. 'The nation,' wrote the wise and far-seeing Turgot, 'has no constitution; it is a society composed of different orders ill assorted, and of a people whose members have few social bonds with one another; where consequently scarcely any one is occupied with anything beyond his private interest exclusively,' and and so forth (*Œuv.* ii. 504). Any student, uncom-

mitted to a theory, who examines in close detail the wise aims and just and conservative methods of Turgot, and the circumstances of his utter rout after a short experiment of twenty months of power, will rise from that deplorable episode with the conviction that a pacific renovation of France, an orderly readjustment of her institutions, was hopelessly impossible. '*Si on avait été sage!*' those cry who consider the Revolution as a futile mutiny. If people had only been prudent, all would have been accomplished that has been accomplished since, and without the sanguinary memories, the constant interpolations of despotism, the waste of generous lives and noble purpose. And this is true. But then prudence itself was impossible. The court and the courtiers were smitten through the working of long tradition by judicial blindness. If Lewis XVI. had been a Frederick, or Marie Antoinette had been a Catherine of Russia, or the nobles had even been stout-hearted gentlemen like our Cavaliers, the great transformation might then have been gradually effected without disorder. But they were none of these, and it was their characters that made the fate and doom of the situation. As for the court, Vergennes used an expression which suggests the very keyword of the situation. He had been ambassador in Turkey, and was fond of declaring that he had learnt in the seraglio how to brave the storms of Versailles. Versailles was like Stamboul or Teheran, oriental in etiquette, oriental in destruction of wealth and capital, oriental in anti-

pathy to a reforming grand vizier. It was the Queen, as we now know by incontestable evidence, who persuaded the King to dismiss Turgot, merely to satisfy some contemptible personal resentments of herself and her creatures.[1] And it was not in Turgot's case only that this ineptitude wrought mischief. In June 1789 Necker was overruled in the wisest elements of his policy and sent into exile by the violent intervention of the same court faction, headed by the same Queen, who had procured the dismissal of Turgot thirteen years earlier. And it was one long tale throughout, from the first hour of the reign down to those last hours at the Tuileries in August 1792; one long tale of intrigue, perversity, and wilful incorrigible infatuation.

Nor was the Queen only to blame. Turgot, says an impartial eye-witness—Creutz, the Swedish ambassador—is a mark for the most formidable league possible, composed of all the great people in the kingdom, all the parliaments, all the finance, all the women of the court, and all the bigots. It was morally impossible that the reforms of any Turgot could have been acquiesced in by that emasculated caste, who showed their quality a few years after his dismissal by flying across the frontier at the first breath of personal danger. 'When the gentlemen rejoiced so boisterously over the fall of Turgot, their applause was blind; on that day they threw away,

[1] *Cor. entre Marie Thérèse et le Comte Mercy-Argenteau*, vol. iii.

and in a manner that was irreparable, the opportunity that was offered them of being born again to political life, and changing the state-candlestick of the royal household for the influence of a preponderant class. The nobility, defeated on the field of feudal privilege, would have risen again by the influence of an assembly where they would have taken the foremost place; by defending the interests of all, by becoming in their turn the ally of the third estate, which had hitherto fought on the side of the kings, they would have repaired the unbroken succession of defeats that had been inflicted on them since Lewis the Fat.'[1] It would be easy to name half a dozen patricians like the Duke d'Ayen, of exceptional public spirit and capacity, but a proud order cannot at the first exigency of a crisis change its traditional front, and abandon the maxims of centuries in a day. As has been said more than once, the oriental policy of the crown towards the nobles had the inevitable effect of cutting them off from all opportunity of acquiring in experience those habits of political wisdom which have saved the territorial aristocracy of our own country. The English nobles in the eighteenth century had become, what they mostly are now, men of business; agriculturists at least as much as politicians; land agents of a very dignified kind, with very large incomes. Sully designed to raise a working agricultural artistocracy, and Colbert to raise a working commercial aristocracy. But the statesman cannot

[1] *Turgot, Philosophe et Economiste.* Par A. Batbie, p. 380.

create or mould a social order at will. Perhaps one reason why the English aristocracy became a truly agricultural body in the eighteenth century was the circumstance that many of the great landowning magnates were Tories, and remained sulking on their estates rather than go to the court of the first two kings of the Hanoverian line; just as the dependence of these two sovereigns of revolutionary title upon the revolution families is one reason why English liberties had time to root themselves thoroughly before the monarchical reaction under George III. In France, for reasons which we have no room to expatiate upon, the experiments both of Sully and of Colbert failed. The result may be read with graphic effect in the pages of Arthur Young, both before the Revolution broke out and again after Burke's superb rhetoric had biassed English opinion against it.

M. Léonce de Lavergne, it is true, in his most interesting book upon the Provincial Assemblies under Lewis XVI., has endeavoured to show that in the great work of administrative reform all classes between 1778 and 1787 had shown themselves full of a liberal and practical spirit. But even in his pages we see enough of apprehensions and dissensions to perceive how deep was the intestine disorganisation; and the attitude of the nobles in 1789 demonstrated how incurable it was by any merely constitutional modifications. Sir Philip Francis, to whom Burke submitted the proof-sheets of the Reflections, at once

with his usual rapid penetration discerned the weakness of the anti-revolutionary position. 'The French of this day,' he told Burke, 'could not act as we did in 1688. They had no constitution as we had to recur to. They had no foundation to build upon. They had no walls to repair. Much less had they "*the elements of a constitution very nearly as good as could be wished.*" A proposition so extraordinary as this last ought to have been made out *in limine*, since the most important deductions are drawn from it.'[1] But, though Burke insisted on drawing his deductions from it with sweeping impetuosity, neither he nor any one else has yet succeeded in establishing that all-important proposition.

What we desire to say, then, comes, in short, to this, that M. Taine has given an exaggerated importance to the literary and speculative activity of the last half century of the old monarchy. In measuring the force of the various antecedents of the Revolution, he has assigned to books and philosophical ideas a place in the scale of dissolvent conditions that belongs more rightly to decayed institutions, to incompetent and incorrigible castes, to economic incongruities that could only be dealt with trenchantly. Books and ideas acquired a certain importance after other things had finally broken up the crumbling system. They supplied a formula for the accomplished fact. 'It was after the Revolution had fairly begun,' as a contemporary says, 'that they sought in Mably and

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 157.

Rousseau for arms to sustain the system towards which the effervescence of some hardy spirits was dragging affairs. It was not the above-named authors who set people's heads aflame. M. Necker alone produced this effect, and determined the explosion.'[1]

The predominance of a historic, instead of an abstract, school of political thought could have saved nothing. It could have saved nothing, because the historic or conservative organs and elements of society were incompetent to realise those progressive ideas which were quite as essential to social continuity as the historic ideas. The historic method in political action is only practicable on condition that some, at any rate, of the great established bodies have the sap of life in their members. In France not even the judiciary, usually the last to part from its ancient roots, was sound and quick. 'The administration of justice,' says Arthur Young, 'was partial, venal, infamous. The conduct of the parliament was profligate and atrocious. The bigotry, ignorance, false principles, and tyranny of these bodies were generally conspicuous.'[2] We know what the court was, we know what the noblesse was, and this is what the third great leading order in the realm was. We repeat, then, that the historic doctrine could get no fulcrum or leverage, and that only the revolutionary doctrine, which the eighteenth century had got ready

[1] Sénac de Meilhan, *Du Gouvernement en France*, 129, etc. (1795).

[2] *Travels in France*, i. 603.

for the crisis, was adequate to the task of social renovation.

Again, we venture to put to M. Taine the following question. If the convulsions of 1789–1794 were due to the revolutionary doctrine, if that doctrine was the poison of the movement, how would he explain the firm, manly, steadfast, unhysterical quality of the American Revolution thirteen years before? It was theoretically based on exactly the same doctrine. Jefferson and Franklin were as well disciplined in the French philosophy of the eighteenth century as Mirabeau or Robespierre. The Declaration of Independence recites the same abstract and unhistoric propositions as the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Why are we to describe the draught which Rousseau and the others had brewed, as a harmless or wholesome prescription for the Americans, and as maddening poison to the French? The answer must be that the quality of the drug is relative to the condition of the patient, and that the vital question for the student of the old *régime* and the circumstances of its fall is what other drug, what better process, could have extricated France on more tranquil terms from her desperate case? The American colonists, in spite of the over-wide formulæ of their Declaration, really never broke with their past in any of its fundamental elements. They had a historic basis of laws and institutions which was still sound and whole, and the political severance from England made no breach in social continuity. If a different result followed in

France, it was not because France was the land of the classic spirit, but because her institutions were inadequate, and her ruling classes incompetent to transform them.

M. Taine's figure of the man who drains the poisonous draught, as having been previously 'a little weak in constitution, but still sound and of peaceful habits,' is entirely delusive. The whole evidence shows that France was not sound, but the very reverse of sound, and no inconsiderable portion of that evidence is to be found in the facts which M. Taine has so industriously collected in his own book. The description of France as a little weak in constitution, but still sound and of peaceful habits, is the more surprising to us because M. Taine himself had in an earlier page (p. 109), when summing up the results of Privilege, ended with these emphatic words: 'Déjà avant l'écroulement final, la France est dissoute, et elle est dissoute parce que les privilégiés ont oublié leur caractère d'hommes publics.' But then is not this rather more than being only a little weak in constitution, and still sound?

THE EXPANSION OF ENGLAND.

'THERE is a vulgar view of politics which sinks them into a mere struggle of interests and parties, and there is a foppish kind of history which aims only at literary display, which produces delightful books hovering between poetry and prose. These perversions, according to me, come from an unnatural divorce between two subjects which belong to one another. Politics are vulgar when they are not liberalised by history, and history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics.' These very just remarks are made by Mr. Seeley in a new book which everybody has been reading, and which is an extremely interesting example of that union of politics with history which its author regards as so useful or even indispensable for the successful prosecution of either history or politics. His lectures on the expansion of England contain a suggestive and valuable study of two great movements in our history, one of them the expansion of the English nation and state together by means of colonies; the other, the stranger expansion by which the vast population of India has passed under the rule of Englishmen. Mr. Seeley has

in his new volume recovered his singularly attractive style and power of literary form. It underwent some obscuration in the three volumes in which the great transformation of Germany and Prussia during the Napoleonic age was not very happily grouped round a biography of Stein. But here the reader once more finds that ease, lucidity, persuasiveness, and mild gravity that were first shown, as they were probably first acquired, in the serious consideration of religious and ethical subjects. Mr. Seeley's aversion for the florid, rhetorical, and over-decorated fashion of writing history has not carried him to the opposite extreme, but it has made him seek sources of interest, where alone the serious student of human affairs would care to find them, in the magnitude of events, the changes of the fortunes of states, and the derivation of momentous consequences from long chains of antecedent causes.

The chances of the time have contributed to make Mr. Seeley's book, in one sense at least, singularly opportune, and have given to a philosophical study the actuality of a political pamphlet. The history of the struggle between England and France for Canada and for India acquires new point at a moment when the old rivalries are again too likely to be awakened in Madagascar, in Oceania, and in more than one region of Africa. The history of the enlargement of the English state, the last survivor of a family of great colonial empires, has a vivid reality at a time when Australasia is calling upon us once more to extend

our borders, and take new races under our sway. The discussion of a colonial system ceases to be an abstract debate, and becomes a question of practical emergency, when a colonial convention presses the diplomacy of the mother-country and prompts its foreign policy. Mr. Seeley's book has thus come upon a tide of popular interest. It has helped, and will still further help, to swell a sentiment that was already slowly rising to full flood. History, it would seem, can speak with two voices—even to disciples equally honest, industrious, and competent. Twenty years ago there was a Regius Professor of History at Oxford who took the same view of his study as is expressed in the words at the head of this article. He applied his mind especially to the colonial question, and came to a conclusion directly opposed to that which commends itself to the Regius Professor of History at Cambridge.[1] Since then a certain reaction has set in, which events will probably show to be superficial, but of which while it lasts Mr. Seeley's speculations will have the benefit. In 1867, when the guarantee of the Canadian railway was proposed in Parliament, Mr. Cave, the member for Barnstaple, remarked that instead of giving three millions sterling with a view of separating Canada from the United States, it would be more sensible and more patriotic to give ten millions in order to unite them. Nobody protested against this remark. If it were repeated

[1] *The Empire*, by Mr. Goldwin Smith, published in 1863—a masterpiece of brilliant style and finished dialectics.

to-day there would be a shout of disapprobation. On the other hand we shall not have another proposal to guarantee a colonial railway. This temporary fluctuation in opinion is not the first instance of men cherishing the shadow after they have rid themselves of the substance, and clinging with remarkable ardour to a sentiment after they have made quite sure that it shall not inconvenience them in practice.

Writing as a historian, Mr. Seeley exhorts us to look at the eighteenth century in a new light and from a new standpoint, which he exhibits with singular skill and power. We could only wish that he had been a little less zealous on behalf of its novelty. His accents are almost querulous as he complains of historical predecessors for their blindness to what in plain truth we have always supposed that they discerned quite as clearly as he discerns it himself. 'Our historians,' he says, 'miss the true point of view in describing the eighteenth century. They make too much of the mere parliamentary wrangle and the agitations about liberty. They do not perceive that in that century the history of England is not in England, but in America and Asia.' 'I shall venture to assert,' he proceeds in another place, 'that the main struggle of England from the time of Louis XIV. to the time of Napoleon was for the possession of the New World; and it is for want of perceiving this that most of us find that century of English history uninteresting.' The same teasing refrain runs through the book. We might be disposed to traverse

Mr. Seeley's assumption that most of us do find the eighteenth century of English history uninteresting. 'In a great part of it,' Mr. Seeley assures us, 'we see nothing but stagnation. The wars seem to lead to nothing, and we do not perceive the working of any new political ideas. That time seems to have created little, so that we can only think of it as prosperous, but not as memorable. Those dim figures, George I. and George II., the long tame administrations of Walpole and Pelham, the commercial war with Spain, the battles of Dettingen and Fontenoy, the foolish prime minister Newcastle, the dull brawls of the Wilkes period, the miserable American war—everywhere alike we seem to remark a want of greatness, a distressing commonness and flatness in men and in affairs.' This would be very sad if it were true, but is it true? A plain man rubs his eyes in amazement at such reproaches. So far from most of us finding the eighteenth century uninteresting, as prosperous rather than memorable, as wanting in greatness, as distressing by the commonness and the flatness of its men and its affairs, we undertake to say that most of us, in the sense of most people who read the English language, know more about, and feel less flatness, and are more interested in the names of the eighteenth century than in those of all other centuries put together. If we are to talk about 'popular histories,' the writer who distances every competitor by an immeasurable distance is Macaulay. Whatever may be said about that illustrious man's style, his conception of history,

his theories of human society, it is at least beyond question or denial that his *Essays* have done more than any other writings of this generation to settle the direction of men's historical interest and curiosity. From Eton and Harrow down to an elementary school in St. Giles's or Bethnal Green, Macaulay's *Essays* are a text-book. At home and in the colonies, they are on every shelf between Shakespeare and the Bible. And of all these famous compositions, none are so widely read or so well-known as those on Clive, Hastings, Chatham, Frederick, Johnson, with the gallery of vigorous and animated figures that Macaulay grouped round these great historic luminaries. We are not now saying that Macaulay's view of the actors or the events of the eighteenth century is sound, comprehensive, philosophical, or in any other way meritorious; we are only examining the truth of Mr. Seeley's assumption that the century which the most popular writer of the day has treated in his most glowing, vivid, picturesque, and varied style, is regarded by the majority of us as destitute of interest, as containing neither memorable men nor memorable affairs, and as overspread with an ignoble pall of all that is flat, stagnant, and common.

Nor is there any better foundation for Mr. Seeley's somewhat peremptory assertion that previous writers all miss what he considers the true point in our history during the eighteenth century. It is simply contrary to fact to assert that 'they do not perceive that in that century the history of England is not in

England; but in America and Asia.' Mr. Green, for instance, was not strong in his grasp of the eighteenth century, and that period is in many respects an extremely unsatisfactory part of his work. Yet if we turn to his *History of the English People*, this is what we find at the very outset of the section that deals with modern England :—

> The Seven Years' War is in fact a turning point in our national history, as it is a turning point in the history of the world. . . . From the close of the Seven Years' War it mattered little whether England counted for less or more with the nations around her. She was no longer a mere European power; she was no longer a rival of Germany or France. Her future action lay in a wider sphere than that of Europe. Mistress of Northern America, the future mistress of India, claiming as her own the empire of the seas, Britain suddenly towered high above nations whose position in a single continent doomed them to comparative insignificance in the after-history of the world. It is this that gives William Pitt so unique a position among our statesmen. His figure in fact stands at the opening of a new epoch in English history—in the history not of England only, but of the English race. However dimly and imperfectly, he alone among his fellows saw that the struggle of the Seven Years' War was a struggle of a wholly different order from the struggles that had gone before it. He felt that the stake he was playing for was something vaster than Britain's standing among the powers of Europe. Even while he backed Frederick in Germany, his eye was not on the Weser, but on the Hudson and the St. Lawrence. 'If I send an army to Germany,' he replied in memorable words to his assailants, 'it is because in Germany I can conquer America!'

This must be pronounced to be, at any rate, a very near approach to that perception which Mr. Seeley denies to his predecessors, of the truth that in the eighteenth century the expansion of England was the important side of her destinies at that epoch.

Then there is Carlyle. Carlyle professed to think ill enough of the eighteenth century—poor bankrupt century, and so forth,—but so little did he find it common, flat, or uninteresting, that he could never tear himself away from it. Can it be pretended that he, too, 'missed the true point of view'? Every reader of the *History of Frederick* remembers the Jenkins's-Ear-Question, and how 'half the World lay hidden in embryo under it. Colonial-Empire, whose is it to be? Shall half the world be England's, for industrial purposes; which is innocent, laudable, conformable to the Multiplication Table, at least, and other plain laws? Shall there be a Yankee Nation, shall there not be; shall the New World be of Spanish type, shall it be of English? Issues which we may call immense.' This, the possession of the new world, was 'England's one Cause of War during the century we are now upon' (Bk. xii. ch. xii.) It is 'the soul of all these Controversies and the one meaning they have' (xvi. xiv.) When the war was over, and the peace made at Hubertsburgh, Carlyle apprehended as clearly as words can express, what the issue of it was for England and the English race. England, he says, is to have America and the dominion of the seas,—considerable facts both,—'and in the

rear of these, the new Country is to get into such merchandisings, colonisings, foreign settlings, gold nuggetings, as lay beyond the drunkenest dreams of Jenkins (supposing Jenkins addicted to liquor)—and in fact to enter on a universal uproar of Machineries, Eldorados, "Unexampled Prosperities," which make a great noise for themselves in the days now come,' with much more to the same effect (xx. xiii.) Allowance made for the dialect, we do not see how the pith and root of the matter, the connection between the transactions of the eighteenth century and the industrial and colonial expansion that followed them, could be more firmly or more accurately seized.

It would be unreasonable to expect these and other writers to isolate the phenomena of national expansion, as Mr. Seeley has been free to do, to the exclusion of other groups of highly important facts in the movements of the time. They were writing history, not monograph. Nor is it certain that Mr. Seeley has escaped the danger to which writers of monographs are exposed. In isolating one set of social facts, the student is naturally liable to make too much of them, in proportion to other facts. Let us agree, for argument's sake, that the expansion of England is the most important of the threads that it is the historian's business to disengage from the rest of the great strand of our history in the eighteenth century. That is no reason why we should ignore the importance of the constitutional struggle between George the Third and the Whigs, from his accession

to the throne in 1760 down to the accession of the younger Pitt to power in 1784. Mr. Seeley will not allow his pupils to waste a glance upon 'the dull brawls of the Wilkes period.' Yet the author of the *Thoughts on the Present Discontents* thought it worth while to devote all the force of his powerful genius to the exploration of the causes of these dull brawls, and perceived under their surface great issues at stake for good government and popular freedom. Mr. Seeley does justice to the importance of the secession of the American colonies. He rightly calls it a stupendous event, perhaps in itself greater than the French Revolution, which so soon followed it. He only, however, discerns one side of its momentous influence, the rise of a new state, and he has not a word to say as to its momentous consequences to the internal politics of the old state from which the colonies had cut themselves off. Yet some of the acutest and greatest Englishmen then living, from Richard Price up to Burke and Fox, believed that it was our battle at home that our kinsfolk were fighting across the Atlantic Ocean, and that the defeat and subjection of the colonists would have proved fatal in the end to the liberties of England herself. Surely the preservation of parliamentary freedom was as important as the curtailment of British dominion, and only less important than the rise of the new American state. Even for a monograph, Mr. Seeley puts his theme in too exclusive a frame; and even from the point of his own pro-

fession that he seeks to discover 'the laws by which states rise, expand, and prosper or fall in this world,' his survey is not sufficiently comprehensive, and his setting is too straitened.

Another criticism may be made upon the author's peculiar delimitation of his subject. We will accept Mr. Seeley's definition of history as having to do with the state, with the growth and the changes of a certain corporate society, acting through certain functionaries and certain assemblies. If the expansion of England was important, not less important were other changes vitally affecting the internal fortunes of the land that was destined to undergo this process. Expansion only acquired its significance in consequence of what happened in England itself. It is the growth of population at home, as a result of our vast extension of manufactures, that makes our colonies both possible and important. There would be nothing capricious or perverse in treating the expansion of England over the seas as strictly secondary to the expansion of England within her own shores, and to all the causes of it in the material resources and the energy and ingenuity of her sons at home. Supposing that a historian were to choose to fix on the mechanical and industrial development of England as the true point of view, we are not sure that as good a case might not be made out for the inventions of Arkwright, Hargreaves, and Crompton as for the acquisition of the colonies; for Brindley and Watt as for Clive and Hastings. Enormous territory is only one of the

acquisitions or instruments of England, and we know no reason why that particular element of growth should be singled out as overtopping the other elements that made it so important as it is. It is not the mere multiplication of a race, nor its diffusion over the habitable globe that sets its deepest mark on the history of a state, but rather those changes in idea, disposition, faculty, and, above all, in institution, which settle what manner of race it shall be that does in this way replenish the earth. From that point of view, after all, as Tocqueville said, the greatest theatre of human affairs is not at Sydney, it is not even at Washington, it is still in our old world of Europe.

That the secession of the American colonies was a stupendous crisis, Mr. Seeley recognises, but his dislike of the idea that their example may be followed by other colonies seems to show that he does not agree with many of us as to the real significance of that great event. He admits, no doubt, that the American Union exerts a strong influence upon us by 'the strange career it runs and the novel experiments it tries.' These novel experiments in government, institutions, and social development, are the most valuable results, as many think, of the American state, and they are the results of its independence. Yet independence is what Mr. Seeley dreads for our present colonies, both for their own sake and ours. If any one thinks that America would be very much what she now is, if she had lost her battle a hundred years ago and had continued to be still attached to

the English crown, though by a very slender link, he must be very blind to what has gone on in Australia.[1] The history of emigration in Canada, of transportation in New South Wales, and of the disastrous denationalisation of the land in Victoria, are useful illustrations of the difference between the experiments of a centralised compared with a decentralised system of government. Neither Australia nor Canada approached the United States in vigour, originality, and spirit, until, like the United States, they were left free to work out their own problems in their own way. It is not the republican form of government that has made all the difference, though that has had many most considerable effects. Independence not only put Americans on their mettle, but it left them with fresh views, with a temper of unbounded adaptability, with an infinite readiness to try experiments, and free room to indulge it as largely as ever they pleased. As Mr. Seeley says, the American Union 'is beyond question the state in which free will is most active and alive in every individual.' He says this, and a few pages further on he agrees that 'there has never been in any community so much happiness, or happiness of a kind so little demoralising, as in the United States.' But he proceeds to deny, not only that the causes of this happiness are political, but that it is in any great

[1] The story has been recently told over again in a little volume by Mr. C. J. Rowe, entitled *Bonds of Disunion, or English Misrule in the Colonies* (Longmans, 1883). The title is somewhat whimsical, but the book is a very forcible and suggestive contribution to the discussion raised by Mr. Seeley.

degree the consequence of secession. He seems to assume that if we accept the first proposition, the second follows. That is not the case. Secession was a political event, but it was secession that left unchecked scope and, more than that, gave a stimulus and an impulse such as nothing else could have given, to the active play and operation of all the non-political forces which Mr. Seeley describes, and which exist in much the same degree in the colonies that still remain to us. It is the value that we set on alacrity and freshness of mind that makes us distrust any project that interferes with the unfettered play and continual liveliness of what Mr. Seeley calls free will in these new communities, and makes us extremely suspicious of that 'clear and reasoned system,' whatever it may be, to which Mr. Seeley implores us all to turn our attention.

II.

We shall now proceed to inquire practically, in a little detail, and in plain English, what 'clear and reasoned system' is possible. It is not profitable to tell us that the greatest of all the immense difficulties in the way of a solution of the problem of the union of Greater Britain into a Federation is a difficulty that we make ourselves: 'is the false preconception which we bring to the question, that the problem is insoluble, that no such thing ever was done or ever will be done.' On the contrary, those who are incurably sceptical of federation, owe their scepticism not

to a preconception at all, but to a reasoned examination of actual schemes that have been proposed, and of actual obstacles that irresistible circumstances interpose. It is when we consider the real life, the material pursuits, the solid interests, the separate frontiers and frontier-policies of the colonies, that we perceive how deeply the notions of Mr. Seeley are tainted with vagueness and dreaminess.

The moral of Mr. Seeley's book is in substance this, that if we allow 'ourselves to be moved sensibly nearer in our thoughts and feelings to the colonies, and accustom ourselves to think of emigrants as not in any way lost to England by settling in the colonies, the result might be, first, that emigration on a vast scale might become our remedy for pauperism; and, secondly, that some organisation might gradually be arrived at which might make the whole force of the empire available in time of war' (p. 298). Regarded as a contribution, then, to that practical statesmanship which is the other side of historical study, Mr. Seeley's book contains two suggestions: emigration on a vast scale and a changed organisation. On the first not many words will be necessary. They come to this, that unless the emigration on a vast scale is voluntary, all experience shows that it will fail inevitably, absolutely, and disastrously: and next, that if it is voluntary, it will never on a vast scale, though it may in rare individual instances, set in a given direction by mere movement of our thoughts and feelings about the flag or the empire. It is not sentiment but

material advantages that settle the currents of emigration. Within a certain number of years 4,500,000 of British emigrants have gone to the United States, and only 2,500,000 to the whole of the British possessions. Last year 179,000 went to the United States, and only 43,000 to Canada. The chairman of the Hudson's Bay Company the other day plainly admitted to his shareholders that 'as long as the United States possessed a prairie country and Canada did not, the former undoubtedly offered greater advantages for the poorer class of emigrants.' He would not force emigrants to go to any particular country, 'but *everything else being equal*, he would exercise what moral influence he could to induce emigrants to go to our own possessions' (Report in *Times*, November 23, 1883). The first step, therefore, is to secure that everything else shall be equal. When soil, climate, facility of acquisition, proximity to English ports, are all equalised, it will be quite time enough to hope for a change in the currents of emigration, and when that time comes the change will be wrought not by emotions of patriotic sentiment, but by calculations of prudence. No true patriot can honestly wish that it should be otherwise, for patriotism is regard for the wellbeing of the people of a country as well as affection for its flag.

Let us now turn to the more important question of some organisation by which the whole force of the empire might be made available in time of war. Our contention is not that the whole force could not, might

not, or ought not to be made available. So far as these issues go, the answer would depend upon the nature and the stress of the contingencies which made resort to the whole force of the empire necessary or desirable. All that we argue for is that the result will never be reached by a standing and permanent organisation. Mr. Seeley does not himself attempt to work out any clear and reasoned system, nor was it his business to do so. Still it is our business to do what we can to take the measure of the idea which his attractive style and literary authority have again thrown into circulation in enthusiastic and unreflecting minds. Many other writers have tried to put this idea into real shape, and when we come to ask from them for further and better particulars the difficulties that come into view are insuperable.

We shall examine some of these projects, and we may as well begin with the most recent. Sir Henry Parkes, in an article just published, after the usual protestations of the sense of slight in the breasts of our kinsfolk, of the vehement desire for a closer union with the mother country, and in favour of a more definite incorporation of Australia in the realm, proceeds to set forth what we suppose to be the best practical contributions that he can think of towards promoting the given end. The 'changes in the imperial connection' which the ex-premier for New South Wales suggests are these:—1. The Australian group of colonies should be confederated, and designated in future the British States of Australia, or the British-

Australian State. 2. A representative council of Australia should sit in London to transact all the business between the Federation and the Imperial Government. 3. In treaties with foreign nations Australia must be consulted, so far as Australian interests may be affected, through her representative council. Sir Henry Parkes, we may remark, gives no instance of a treaty with a foreign nation in which Australian interests have been injured or overlooked. 4. Englishmen in Australia must be on an equal footing with Englishmen within the United Kingdom as recipients of marks of the royal favour; especially they should be made peers. 5. The functions of governor should be limited as much as possible to those which are discharged by the Sovereign in the present working of the Constitution, and to State ceremonies. These are the suggestions which Sir Henry Parkes throws out 'without reserve or hesitation,' as pointing to the direction in which 'well-considered changes' should take place. The familiar plan for solving the problem by the representation of the colonies in the Imperial Parliament he peremptorily repudiates. 'That,' he says, 'would be abortive from the first, and end in creating new jealousies and discontents.' What it all comes to, then, is that the sentiment of union between Englishmen here and Englishmen at the Antipodes is to be strengthened, first, by making more Knights of St. Michael and St. George; second, by a liberal creation of Victorian, Tasmanian, and New South Welsh peerages; third,

by reducing the officer who represents the political link between us to a position of mere decorative nullity; and fourth, by bringing half a dozen or a score or fifty honest gentlemen many thousands of miles away from their own affairs, in order to transact business which is despatched without complaint or hindrance in a tolerably short interview once a week, or once a month, or once a quarter, between the Secretary of State and the Agent-General. If that is all, we can only say that seldom has so puny a mouse come forth from so imposing a mountain.

'The English people,' says Sir Henry Parkes, 'in Europe, in America, in Africa, in Asia, in Australasia, are surely destined for a mission beyond the work which has consumed the energies of nations throughout the buried centuries. If they hold together in the generations before us in one world-embracing empire, maintaining and propagating the principles of justice, freedom and peace, what blessings might arise from their united power to beautify and invigorate the world.' This is the eloquent expression of a lofty and generous aspiration which every good Englishman shares, and to which he will in his heart fervently respond. But the Australian statesman cannot seriously think that the maintenance and propagation of justice, freedom and peace, the beautifying and invigorating of the world, or any of the other blessings of united power, depend on the four or five devices, all of them trivial, and some of them contemptible, which figure in his project. Of all ways

of gratifying a democratic community that we have ever heard of, the institution of hereditary rank seems the most singular,—supported, as we presume that rank would be, by primogeniture and landed settlements. As for the consultative council, which is an old suggestion of Lord Grey's, what is the answer to the following dilemma? If the Crown is to act on the advice of the agents then the imperial politics of any one colony must either be regulated by a vote of the majority of the members of the council—however unpalatable the decision arrived at may be to the colony affected—or else the Crown will be enabled to exercise its own discretion, and so to arrogate to itself the right to direct colonial policy (Rowe's *Bonds of Disunion*, 356). The simpleton in the jest-books is made to talk of a bridge dividing the two banks of a stream. Sir Henry Parkes's plan of union would soon prove a dividing bridge in good earnest.

Sir Henry Parkes does not try to conceal from us, he rather presses upon us by way of warning, that separation from England is an event which, 'whatever surface-loyalists may say to the contrary, is unquestionably not out of the range of possibilities within the next generation.' 'There are persons in Australia, and in most of the Australian legislatures, who avowedly or tacitly favour the idea of separation.' 'In regard to the large mass of the English people in Australia,' he adds on another page, 'there can be no doubt of their genuine loyalty to the present state, and their affectionate admiration for the present illus-

trious occupant of the Throne. But this loyalty is nourished at a great distance, and by tens of thousands daily increasing, who have never known any land but the one dear land where they dwell. It is the growth of a semi-tropical soil, alike tender and luxuriant, and a slight thing may bruise, even snap asunder, its young tendrils.'

'The successful in adventure and enterprise,' he says with just prescience, 'will want other rewards than the mere accumulation of wealth,' and other rewards, may we add, than knighthoods and sham peerages. 'The awakening ambitions of the gifted and heroic will need fitting spheres for their honourable gratification,' and such spheres, we may be very sure, will not be found in a third-rate little consultative council, planted in a back-room in Westminster, waiting for the commands of the Secretary of State. In short, a suspicion dawns upon one's mind that this sense of coldness, this vague craving for closer bonds, this crying for a union, on the part of some colonists, is, in truth, a sign of restless *malaise*, which means, if it were probed to the bottom, not a desire for union at all, but a sense of fitness for independence.

There are great and growing difficulties in the matter of foreign and inter-colonial relations. But these will not be solved by a council which may be at variance with the government and majority in the colony. They are much better solved, as they arise, by a conference with the Agent for the Colonies, or, as has been done in the case of Canada, by allowing

the government of the colony to take a part in the negotiations, and to settle its own terms. Fisheries, copyright, and even customs' duties, are instances in point. This is a process which will have to be carried further. Each large colony will have relations to foreign countries more and more distant from those of the mother country, and must be allowed to deal with those relations itself. How this is to be done will be a problem in each case. It will furnish a new chapter of international law. But it is a chapter of law which will grow *pro re natâ*. Its growth will not be helped or forwarded by any *a priori* system. Any such system would be attended with all the evils of defective foresight, and would both fetter and irritate.

III.

To test the strain that Australian attachment to the imperial connection would bear, we have a right to imagine the contingency of Great Britain being involved in a war with a foreign Power of the first class. Leaving Sir Henry Parkes, we find another authority to enlighten us upon the consequences in such a case. Mr. Archibald Forbes is a keen observer, not addicted to abstract speculation, but with a military eye for facts and forces as they actually are, without reference to sentiments or ideals to which anybody else may wish to adjust them. Mr. Forbes has traced out some of the effects upon Australian interests of an armed conflict between the mother country and a

powerful adversary. Upon the Australian colonies, he says emphatically, such a conflict would certainly bring wide-ranging and terrible mischiefs. We had a glimpse of what would happen at once, in the organised haste with which Russia prepared to send to sea swift cruisers equipped in America, when trouble with England seemed imminent in 1878. We have a vast fleet, no doubt, but not vast enough both to picquet our own coast-line with war-ships against raids on unprotected coast-towns, and besides that to cover the great outlying flanks of the Empire. These hostile cruisers would haunt Australasian waters (coaling in the neutral ports about the Eastern Archipelago), and there would be scares, risks, uncertainties, that would derange trade, chill enterprise, and frighten banks. Another consideration, not mentioned by Mr. Forbes, may be added. We now do the carrying trade of Australasia to the great benefit of English shipowners (See *Economist*, August 27, 1881). If the English flag were in danger from foreign cruisers, Australia would cease to employ our ships, and might possibly find immunity in separation and in establishing a neutral flag of her own.

Other definite evils would follow war. The Australasian colonist lives from hand to mouth, carries on his trade with borrowed money, and pays his way by the prompt disposal of his produce. Hence it is that the smallest frown of tight money sends a swift shock, vibrating and thrilling, all through the Australasian communities. War would at once hamper

their transactions. It would bring enhanced freights and higher rates of insurance to cover war risks. This direct dislocation of commerce would be attended in time by default of payment of interest on the colonial debt, public, semi-public, and private. As the vast mass of this debt is held in England, the default of the Englishmen in Australia would injure and irritate Englishmen at home, and the result would be severe tension. The colonial debtor would be all the more offended, from his consciousness that 'the pinch which had made him a defaulter would have a purely gratuitous character so far as he was concerned.'

'I, at least,' says Mr. Forbes, in concluding his little forecast, 'have the implicit conviction that if England should ever be engaged in a severe struggle with a Power of strength and means, in what condition soever that struggle might leave her, one of its outcomes would be to detach from her the Australian colonies' (*Nineteenth Century*, for October 1883). In other words, one of the most certain results of pursuing the spirited foreign policy in Europe, which is so dear to the Imperialist or Bombastic school, would be to bring about that disintegration of the Empire which the same school regard as the crown of national disaster.

It would be a happy day for the Peace Society that should give the colonies a veto on imperial war. It is true that during the Indian Mutiny New South Wales offered to send away the battery for which it paid, but when the despatch actually took place it

was furious. Australia has militiamen, but who supposes that they can be spared in any numbers worth considering for long campaigns, and this further loss and dislocation added to those which have been enumerated by Mr. Forbes? Supposing, for the sake of argument, that Australia were represented in the body that decided on war, though we may notice that war is often entered upon even in our own virtuous days without preliminary consent from Parliament, nobody believes that the presence of Australian representatives in the imperial assembly that voted the funds would reconcile their constituents at the other side of the globe to paying money for a war, say, for the defence of Afghanistan against Russia, or for the defence of Belgian neutrality. The Australian, having as much as he can do to carry on from hand to mouth, would speedily repent himself of that close and filial union with the mother country, which he is now supposed so ardently to desire, when he found his personal resources crippled for the sake of European guarantees or Indian frontiers. We had a rather interesting test only the other day of the cheerful open-handedness that English statesmen expect to find in colonial contributions for imperial purposes. We sent an expedition to Egypt, having among its objects the security of the Suez Canal. The Canal is part of the highway to India, so (shabbily enough, as some think) we compelled India to pay a quota towards the cost of the expedition. But to nobody is the Canal more useful than to our countrymen in

Australia. It has extended the market for their exports and given fresh scope for their trade. Yet from them nobody dreams of asking a farthing. Nor do the pictures drawn by Mr. Forbes and others encourage the hope that any Ministry in any one of the seven Australian Governments is likely to propose self-denying ordinances that take the shape of taxes for imperial objects. 'He is a hard-headed man, the Australian,' says Mr. Forbes, 'and has a keen regard for his own interest, with which in the details of his business life, his unquestionable attachment to his not over-affectionate mother, is not permitted materially to interfere. Where his pocket is concerned he displays for her no special favouritism. For her, in no commercial sense, is there any "most favoured nation" clause in his code. He taxes alike imports from Britain and from Batavia. His wool goes to England because London is the wool market of the world, not because England is England. He transacts his import commerce mainly with England because it is there where the proceeds of the sale of his wool provide him with financial facilities. But he has no sentimental predilection for the London market.'

IV.

Proposals of a more original kind than those of Sir Henry Parkes have been made by the Earl of Dunraven, though they are hardly more successful in standing cross-examination. Lord Dunraven has

seen a great deal of the world, and has both courage and freshness of mind. He scolds Liberals for attaching too little importance to colonies, and not perceiving that our national existence is bound up with our existence as an empire. We are dependent in an increasing degree on foreign countries for our supply of food, and therefore we might starve in time of war unless we had an efficient fleet; but fleets, to be efficient, must be able to keep the sea for any length of time, and they can only do this by means of the accommodation afforded by our various dependencies and colonies dotted over the surface of the globe. This is a very good argument so far as it goes, but of course it would be met, say in South Africa, by keeping Table Mount and Simon's Bay, and letting the rest go. It might, too, as we all know, be met in another way, namely, by the enforcement at sea of the principles of warfare on land, and the abandonment of the right of seizure of the property of private individuals on the ocean.

Besides that, says Lord Dunraven, the colonies are by far our best customers, and our only chance of increasing or maintaining our trade lies in 'the development of the colonies.' What development means he does not very clearly explain. Subsidised emigration and all such devices he dismisses as futile. Some means should be devised, he says, whereby the independent colonies should have a voice in the management of matters affecting the empire: what those means might exactly be he does not even hint.

The mother country and the colonies might be drawn closer together by the abandonment of free trade and the formation of an imperial Zollverein or Greater British Customs Union. In this way capital would move more freely within the empire from one portion to another—as if capital which has gone from Great Britain to the Australian group of colonies to such a tune that the public indebtedness there is three times the amount per head in the mother country (to say nothing of the vast sums embarked in private enterprise, bringing up the aggregate debt to a million and a quarter), did not move quite freely enough as it is. Supply would at last have an opportunity of accommodating itself to demand without let or hindrance over a large portion of the earth's surface —as if more were necessary for this than the simple reduction of their tariffs, which is within the power of the protectionist colonies without federation, confederation, or any other device whatever. As it is, by the way, the colonies take nearly four times as much per head per annum of our manufactures as is taken by the United States (32s. against 8s. 4d.)

It is not necessary for me here, even if there were space, to state the arguments against the possibility of a perfect Customs Union embracing the whole British Empire. They have been recently set forth by the masterly hand of Sir Thomas Farrer (*Fair Trade* v. *Free Trade*, published by the Cobden Club, pp. 38-60). The objections to such a solution rest on the fact that it involves the same fiscal system

in countries differing widely as the poles in climate, in government, in habits, and in political opinions. 'It would prevent any change in taxation in one of the countries constituting the British Empire, unless the same change were made in all.' To require Canada and Australia to adopt our system of external taxation, to model their own internal taxation accordingly, and to continue to insist on that requirement, whatever their own change either of opinion or condition might be, would be simply destructive of local self-government. 'Free Trade is of extreme importance, but Freedom is more important still.'

V.

Among the devices for bringing the mother country and the great colonies into closer contact, we do not at present hear much of the old plan for giving seats to colonial representatives in the British Parliament. It was discussed in old days by men of great authority. Burke had no faith in it, while Adam Smith argued in its favour. Twenty years before the beginning of the final struggle the plan was rejected by Franklin. In 1831 Joseph Hume proposed that India should have four members, the Crown colonies eight, the West Indies three, and the Channel Islands one. Mr. Seeley's book may for a little time revive vague notions of the same specific. Sir Edward Creasy, also by the way a professor of history, openly advocated it, but with the truly remarkable reservation

that 'the colonies should be admitted to shares in the Imperial Parliament on the understanding that they contributed nothing at all to the imperial revenue by taxation.'[1] That is, they are to vote our money, but we are not to vote theirs. As Cobden saw, this is a flaw that is fatal to the scheme. 'What is the reason,' he asked, 'that no statesman has ever dreamt of proposing that the colonies should sit with the mother country in a common legislature? It was not because of the space between them, for nowadays travelling was almost as quick as thought; but because the colonies, not paying imperial taxation, and not being liable for our debt, could not be allowed with safety to us, or with propriety to themselves, to legislate on matters of taxation in which they were not themselves concerned.' He also dwelt on the mischief inseparable from the presence of a sectional and isolated interest in Parliament (*Speeches*, i. 568, 569). Lord Grey points out another difficulty. The colonial members, he says, would necessarily enroll themselves in the ranks of one or other of our parliamentary parties. 'If they adhered to the Opposition, it would be impossible for them to hold confidential intercourse with the Government; and if they supported the Ministers of the day, the defeat of the administration would render their relations with a new one still more difficult' (*Nineteenth Century*, June 1879). In short, since the concession of independent legislatures to all the most important colonies, the

[1] *Constitutions of the Britannic Empire* (1872), p. 43.

idea of summoning representatives to the Imperial Parliament is, indeed, as one high colonial authority has declared it to be, a romantic dream. If the legislature of Victoria is left to settle the local affairs of Victoria, the legislature of the United Kingdom must be left to settle our local affairs. Therefore the colonial members could only be invited to take a part on certain occasions in reference to certain imperial matters. But this would mean that we should no longer have one Parliament but two, or, in other words, we should have a British Parliament and a Federal Council.

Another consideration of the highest moment ought not to be overlooked. In view of our increasing population, social complexities, and industrial and commercial engagements of all kinds, *time* is of vital importance for the purposes of domestic legislation and internal improvements. Is the time and brain-power of our legislators, and of those of our colonies too, to be diverted perpetually from their own special concerns and the improvement of their own people, to the more showy but less fruitful task of keeping together and managing an artificial Empire?

VI.

Eight or nine years ago Mr. Forster delivered an important address at Edinburgh on our Colonial Empire. It was a weighty attempt to give the same impulse to people's minds from the political point of

view as Mr. Seeley tries to give from the historical. Mr. Forster did not think that 'the admission of colonial representatives into our Parliament could be a permanent form of association,' though he added that it might possibly be useful in the temporary transition from the dependent to the associated relation. In what way it would be useful he did not more particularly explain. The ultimate solution he finds in some kind of federation. The general conditions of union, in order that our empire should continue, he defines as threefold. 'The different self-governing communities must agree in maintaining allegiance to one monarch—in maintaining a common nationality, so that each subject may find that he has the political rights and privileges of other subjects wheresoever he may go in the realm;[1] and, lastly, must agree not only in maintaining a mutual alliance in all relations with foreign powers, but in apportioning among themselves the obligations imposed by such alliance."[2] It is, as everybody knows, at the last of the three points that the pinch is found. The threatened conflict between the Imperial and the Irish parliaments on the Regency in 1788, 1789 warns us that difficulties might arise on the first head, and it may be well to remember under the second head that the son of a marriage between a man and his sister-

[1] The refusal to allow the informers in the Phœnix Park trials to land in Australia is worth remembering under this head.

[2] *Our Colonial Empire.* By the Right Hon. W. E. Forster, M.P. Edmonston and Douglas. 1875.

in-law has not at present the same civil right in different parts of the realm. But let this pass. The true question turns upon the apportionment of the obligations incurred by states entering a federal union on equal terms. What is to be the machinery of this future association? Mr. Forster, like Mr. Seeley, and perhaps with equally good right, leaves time to find the answer, contenting himself with the homely assurance that 'when the time comes it will be found that where there's a will there's a way.' Our position is that the will depends upon the way, and that the more any possible way of federation is considered, the less likely is there to be the will.

It is not in the mere machinery of federation that insurmountable difficulties arise, but in satisfying ourselves that the national sentiment would supply steam enough to work the machinery. Of course we should at once be brought face to face with that which is, in Mr. Forster's judgment, one of the strongest arguments against giving responsible government to Ireland, the necessity for a written constitution. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council were engaged only the other day in hearing a dispute on appeal (Hodge *v.* the Queen), turning on the respective powers of the legislature of Ontario and the Parliament of the Dominion. The instrument to be interpreted was the British North America Act, but who will draft us a bill that shall settle the respective powers of the Dominion legislature, the British legislature, and the Universal Greater British legislature?

It would be interesting to learn what place in the great Staatenbund or Bundes-staat would be given to possessions of the class of the West Indies, Mauritius, the West Coast, and such *propugnacula* of the Empire as Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, or Hong-Kong. What have we to offer Australia in return for joining us in a share of such obligations as all these entail? Are her taxpayers anxious to contribute to their cost? Have her politicians either leisure or special competency for aiding in their administration? India, we must assume, would come within the province and jurisdiction of the Federation. It would hardly be either an advantage or a pleasure to the people of a young country, with all their busy tasks hot on their hands, to be interrupted by the duty of helping by men or cash to put down an Indian Mutiny, and even in quiet times to see their politicians attending to India instead of minding their own very sufficiently exacting business.

The Federal Council would be, we may suppose, deliberative and executive, but we have not been told whence its executive would be taken. If from its own members, then London (if that is to be the seat of the Federal Government) would see not only two legislatures, but two cabinets, because it would certainly happen that the Federal Council would constantly give its confidence to men sent to it from the colonies, and not having seats in the British Parliament. In that case the mother of parliaments would sink into the condition of a state legislature, though

the contributions of Great Britain would certainly be many times larger than those of all the colonies put together. If, on the contrary view, Great Britain were to take the lead in the Council, to shape its policy, and to furnish its ministers, can anybody doubt that the same resentment and sense of grievance which was in old times directed against the centralisation of the Colonial Office, would instantly revive against the centralisation of the new Council?

Nobody has explained what is to be the sanction of any decree, levy, or ordinance of the Federal Council; in other words, how it would deal with any member of the Confederacy who should refuse to provide money or perform any other act prescribed by the common authority of the Bund. If anybody supposes that England, for instance, would send a fleet to Canada to collect ship-money in the name of the Federal Council, it would be just as easy to imagine her sending a fleet in her own name. Nothing can be more absurd than any supposition of that kind, except the counter-supposition that no confederated state would ever fail to fall cheerfully in with the requirements of the rest of them. Mr. Forster has an earnest faith that the union would work well, but that does not prevent him from inserting a possible proviso or understanding that 'any member of the Federation, either the mother country or any of its children, should have an acknowledged right to withdraw from the mutual alliance on giving reasonable notice.' No doubt such a proviso would be essential,

but if a similar one had been accepted in America after the election of President Lincoln, the American Union would have lasted exactly eighty years, and no more. The catastrophe was prevented by the very effective sanction which the Federalists proved themselves to possess in reserve.

What is the common bond that is to bring the various colonies into a federal union? It is certain that it will have to be a bond of political and national interest, and not of sentiment merely, though the sentiment may serve by way of decoration. We all know how extremely difficult it was to bring the provinces of Canada to form themselves into the Dominion. It is within immediate memory that in South Africa, in spite of the most diligent efforts of ministers and of parliament, the interests of the Cape, of Natal, of Griqualand, and the two Dutch republics were found to be so disparate that the scheme of confederation fell hopelessly to pieces. In Australia the recent conference at Sydney is supposed to have given a little impulse towards confederation, but the best informed persons on the spot have no belief that anything practical can come of it for a very long time to come, if ever,—so divergent are both the various interests and men's views of their interests. Three years ago a conference of all the Australian colonies was held to consider the adoption of a common fiscal policy. The delegates of New South Wales, South Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and Western Australia voted in favour of a resolution which recom-

mended the appointment of a joint commission to construct a common tariff, but Victoria voted in a minority of one, and the project was therefore abandoned. If there is this difficulty in bringing the colonies of a given region into union, we may guess how enormous would be the difficulty of framing a scheme of union that should interest and attract regions *penitus toto divisos orbe.*

Another line of consideration brings us still more directly to the same probability of a speedy deadlock. In Mr. Forster's ideal federation there must, he says, be one principle of action throughout the empire concerning the treatment of uncivilised or half civilised races. With the motive of this humane reservation all good Englishmen, wherever they live, will ardently sympathise. But how would a Federal Union have any more power than Lord Kimberley had to prevent a Cape parliament, for instance, from passing a Vagrant Act? That Act contained, as Lord Kimberley confessed, some startling clauses, and its object was in fact to place blacks under the necessity of working for whites at low wages. He was obliged to say that he had no power to alter it, and we may be quite sure that if the Executive of the Greater British Union had been in existence, and had tried to alter the Act, that would have been the signal for South Africa to walk out of the union. We may look at such contingencies in another way. Great Britain, according to a statement made by Mr. Gladstone in the last session of parliament, has spent more than twelve millions ster-

ling on frontier wars in South Africa during the eighty years that we have been unfortunate enough to have that territory on our hands. The conduct of the colonists to the natives has been the main cause of these wars, and yet it is stated that they themselves have never contributed more than £10,000 a year towards military expenditure on their account. Is it possible to suppose that the Canadian lumberman and the Australian sheep-farmer will cheerfully become contributors to a Greater British fund for keeping Basutos, Pondos, Zulus quiet to please the honourable gentlemen from South Africa, especially as two-thirds of the constituents of these honourable gentlemen would be not Englishmen but Dutchmen? Yet if the stoppage of supplies of this kind would be one of the first results of the transformation of the mother country into the stepmother Union, what motive would South Africa have for entering it? On the other hand, is there any reason to suppose that South Africa would contribute towards the maintenance of cruisers to keep French convicts and others out of the Pacific, or towards expeditions to enable the Queensland planters to get cheap labour, or to prevent Australian adventurers from land-grabbing in New Guinea? If it be said that the moral weight of a great union of expanded Englishmen would procure a cessation of the harsh or aggressive policy that leads to these costly little wars, one can only reply that this will be a very odd result of giving a decisive voice in imperial affairs to those portions of our people who, from their posi-

tion and their interests, have been least open to philanthropic susceptibilities. It is perfectly plain that the chief source of the embarassments of the mother country in dealing with colonies endowed with responsible government would simply be reproduced if a Federal Council were sitting in Downing Street in the place of the Secretary of State.

The objections arising from the absence of common interest and common knowledge may be illustrated in the case of the disputed rights of fishery off Newfoundland. It has been suggested by Lord Grey that in such a matter it would be of great advantage to have in the standing committee of colonial privy councillors which he proposes a body which would both give it information as to the wishes and opinions of the colonies, and assist in conveying to the colonies authentic explanation of the reasons for the measures adopted. That the agents from Newfoundland could give the Government information is certain, but what light could the agents from New Zealand throw on the fishery question? Then apply the case to the proposal of a Federation. As the question raises discussions with the United States and with France, it is an imperial matter, and would be referred to the Federal Council. That body, in spite of its miscellaneous composition, would be no better informed of the merits of the case than the present cabinet, nor do we know why it should be more likely to come to a wise decision. However that might be, we cannot easily believe that the merchant of Cape Town or the

sugar-planter in Queensland, or the coffee-grower in Fiji, would willingly pay twopence or fourpence of income tax for a war with France, however authentic might be the explanations given to him of the reasons why the fishermen of Nova Scotia had destroyed the huts and the drying stages of French rivals on a disputed foreshore. We fail to see why the fact of the authentic explanation being conveyed by his own particular delegate should be much more soothing to him than if they were conveyed by the Secretary of State, for, after all, as Mr. Seeley will assure him, Lord Derby and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach are brothers and fellow-countrymen. No, we may depend upon it that it would be a *mandat impératif* on every federal delegate not to vote a penny for any war, or preparation for war, that might arise from the direct or indirect interests of any colony but his own.

I have said little of the difficulties arising from the vast geographic distances that separate these great outlying communities from one another, and from the mother country. But those difficulties exist, and they are in one sense at the root of others more important than themselves. 'Countries separated by half the globe,' says Mill in his excellent chapter on the government of dependencies by a free state, 'do not present the natural conditions for being members of one federation. If they had sufficiently the same interests, they have not, and never can have, a sufficient habit of taking counsel together. They are not part of the same public; they do not

discuss and deliberate in the same arena, but apart, and have only a most imperfect knowledge of what passes in the minds of one another. They neither know each other's objects nor have confidence in each other's principles of conduct. Let any Englishman ask himself how he should like his destinies to depend on an assembly of which one-third was British-American and another third South African and Australian. Yet to this it must come, if there were anything like fair or equal representation; and would not every one feel that the representatives of Canada and Australia, even in matters of an imperial character, could not know or feel any sufficient concern for the interests, opinions, or wishes of English, Irish, or Scotch?'[1] Tariffs, as we have seen, are one question, and the treatment of native races is another, where this want of sympathy and agreement between Englishmen at home and Englishmen in the most important colonies is open and flagrant.

The actual circumstances of federal unions justify Mill's remark on the impossibility of meeting the conditions of such politics where the communities are separated by half the globe; nor does the fact that New Zealand is now only forty days from the Thames make any difference. The districts of the Aetolian, and the towns of the Achæan, League were in effect neighbours. The Germanic Confederation was composed of kingdoms and principalities that are conterminous. The American Union is geographically

[1] J. S. Mill *On Representative Government*, pp. 317, 318.

solid. So are the cantons of the Swiss Confederation. The nine millions of square miles over which the British flag waves are dispersed over the whole surface of the globe. The fact that this consideration is so trite and obvious does not prevent it from being an essential element in the argument. Mr. Seeley's precedents are not at all in point.

It is no answer to say, with Mr. Forster, that 'English-speaking men and women look at life and its problems, especially the problems of government, with much the same eyes everywhere.' For the purposes of academic discussion, and with reference to certain moral generalities, this might be fairly true. But the problems of government bring us into a sphere where people are called upon to make sacrifices, in the shape of taxation if in no other, and here English-speaking men and women are wont not by any means to look at life and its problems, from George Grenville's Stamp Act down to the 333 articles in the tariff of Victoria, with the same eyes. The problems of government arise from clashing interests, and in that clash the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin is the resolution not willingly to make sacrifices without objects which are thought to be worth them. If we can both persuade ourselves and convince the colonists that the gains of a closer confederation will compensate for the sacrifices entailed by it, we shall then look at the problem with the same eyes: if not, not. Englishmen at home withdrew the troops from New Zealand because we did

not choose to pay for them. Englishmen in Canada and Victoria do their best to injure our manufactures because they wish to nurse their own. The substance of character, the leading instincts, the love of freedom, the turn for integrity, the taste for fair play, all the great traits and larger principles may remain the same, but there is abundant room in the application of the same principles and the satisfaction of the same instincts for the rise of bitter contention and passionate differences. The bloodiest struggle of our generation was between English-speaking men of the North and English-speaking men of the South, because economic difficulties had brought up a problem of government which the two parties to the strife looked at with different eyes from difference of habit and of interest. It is far from being enough, therefore, to rely on a general spirit of concord in the broad objects of government for overcoming the differences which distance may chance to make in its narrow and particular objects.

If difficulties of distance, we are asked by the same statesman, 'have not prevented the government of a colony from England, why must they prevent the association of self-governing communities with England?' But distance was one of the principal causes, and perhaps we should not be far wrong in saying that it was the principal cause, why the time came when some colonies could no longer be governed from England—distance, and all those divergencies of thought and principle referred to by Mill, which

distance permitted or caused to spring into existence and to thrive.

The present writer claims to belong as little to the Pessimist as to the Bombastic school—to borrow Mr. Seeley's phrase—unless it is to be a Pessimist to seek a foothold in positive conditions and to insist on facing hard facts. The sense of English kinship is as lively in us as in other people, and we have the same pride in English energy, resolution, and stoutness of heart, whether these virtues show themselves in the young countries or the old. We agree in desiring a strong and constant play between the thoughts, the ideals, the institutions, of Englishmen in the island-home and Englishmen who have carried its rational freedom and its strenuous industry to new homes in every sea. Those who in our domestic politics are most prepared to welcome democratic changes can have least prejudice against countrymen who are showing triumphantly how order and prosperity are not incompatible with a free Church, with free schools, with the payment of members, with manhood suffrage, and with the absence of a hereditary chamber. Neither are we misled by a spurious analogy between a colony ready for independence and a grown-up son ready to enter life on his own account; nor by Turgot's comparison of colonies to fruit which hangs on the tree only till it is ripe. We take our stand on Mr. Seeley's own plain principles that 'all political unions exist for the good of their members, and should be just as large, and no larger, as they can be without ceasing to be beneficial.'

The inquiry is simply whether the good of the members of our great English union all over the world will be best promoted by aiming at an artificial centralisation, or by leaving as much room as possible for the expansion of individual communities along lines and in channels which they may spontaneously cut out for themselves. If our ideal is a great Roman Empire, which shall be capable by means of fleets and armies of imposing its will upon the world, then it is satisfactory to think, for the reasons above given, that the ideal is an unattainable one. Any closer union of the British Empire attempted with this object would absolutely fail. The unwieldy weapon would break in our hands. The ideal is as impracticable as it is puerile and retrograde.

AUGUSTE COMTE.[1]

COMTE is now generally admitted to have been the most eminent and important of that interesting group of thinkers whom the overthrow of old institutions in France turned towards social speculation. Vastly superior as he was to men like De Maistre on the one hand, and to men like Saint Simon or Fourier on the other, as well in scientific acquisitions as in mental capacity, still the aim and interest of all his thinking was also theirs, namely, the renovation of the conditions of the social union. If, however, we classify him, not thus according to aim, but according to method, then he takes rank among men of a very different type from these. What distinguishes him in method from his contemporaries is his discernment that the social order cannot be transformed until all the theoretic conceptions that belong to it have been rehandled in a scientific spirit, and maturely gathered up into a systematic whole along with the rest of our knowledge. This presiding doctrine connects Comte with the social thinkers of the eighteenth

[1] Reprinted by the kind permission of Messrs. A. and C. Black from the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

century,—indirectly with Montesquieu, directly with Turgot, and more closely than either with Condorcet, of whom he was accustomed to speak as his philosophic father.

Isidore-Auguste-Marie-François-Xavier Comte was born in January 1798, at Montpellier, where his father was a receiver-general of taxes for the district. He was sent for his earliest instruction to the school of the town, and in 1814 was admitted to the École Polytechnique. His youth was marked by a constant willingness to rebel against merely official authority; to genuine excellence, whether moral or intellectual, he was always ready to pay unbounded deference. That strenuous application which was one of his most remarkable gifts in manhood showed itself in his youth, and his application was backed or inspired by superior intelligence and aptness. After he had been two years at the École Polytechnique he took a foremost part in a mutinous demonstration against one of the masters; the school was broken up, and Comte like the other scholars was sent home. To the great dissatisfaction of his parents, he resolved to return to Paris (1816), and to earn his living there by giving lessons in mathematics. Benjamin Franklin was the youth's idol at this moment. 'I seek to imitate the modern Socrates,' he wrote to a school friend, 'not in talents, but in way of living. You know that at five and twenty he formed the design of becoming perfectly wise, and that he fulfilled his design. I have dared to undertake the same thing,

though I am not yet twenty.' Though Comte's character and aims were as far removed as possible from Franklin's type, neither Franklin nor any man that ever lived could surpass him in the heroic tenacity with which, in the face of a thousand obstacles, he pursued his own ideal of a vocation.

For a moment circumstances led him to think of seeking a career in America, but a friend who preceded him thither warned him of the purely practical spirit that prevailed in the new country. 'If Lagrange were to come to the United States, he could only earn his livelihood by turning land surveyor.' So Comte remained in Paris, living as he best could on something less than £80 a year, and hoping, when he took the trouble to break his meditations upon greater things by hopes about himself, that he might by and by obtain an appointment as mathematical master in a school. A friend procured him a situation as tutor in the house of Casimir Périer. The salary was good, but the duties were too miscellaneous, and what was still worse, there was an end of the delicious liberty of the garret. After a short experience of three weeks Comte returned to neediness and contentment. He was not altogether without the young man's appetite for pleasure; yet when he was only nineteen we find him wondering, amid the gaieties of the carnival of 1817, how a gavotte or a minuet could make people forget that thirty thousand human beings around them had barely a morsel to eat. Hardship in youth has many drawbacks, but

it has the immense advantage over academic ease of making the student's interest in men real, and not merely literary..

Towards 1818 Comte became associated as friend and disciple with a man who was destined to exercise a very decisive influence upon the turn of his speculation. Henry, count of Saint Simon, was second cousin of the famous duke of Saint Simon, the friend of the Regent, and author of the most important set of memoirs in a language that is so incomparably rich in memoirs. He was now nearly sixty, and if he had not gained a serious reputation, he had at least excited the curiosity and interest of his contemporaries by the social eccentricities of his life, by the multitude of his schemes and devices, and by the fantastic ingenuity of his political ideas. Saint Simon's most characteristic faculty was an exuberant imagination, working in the sphere of real things. Scientific discipline did nothing for him; he had never undergone it, and he never felt its value. He was an artist in social construction; and if right ideas, or the suggestion of right ideas, sometimes came into his head, about history, about human progress, about a stable polity, such ideas were not the products of trains of ordered reasoning; they were the intuitional glimpses of the poet, and consequently as they professed to be in real matter, even the right ideas were as often as not accompanied by wrong ones.

The young Comte, now twenty, was enchanted by the philosophic veteran. In after years he so far for-

got himself as to write of Saint Simon as a depraved quack, and to deplore his connection with him as purely mischievous. While the connection lasted he thought very differently. Saint Simon is described as the most estimable and lovable of men, and the most delightful in his relations; he is the worthiest of philosophers. Even after the association had come to an end, and at the very moment when Comte was congratulating himself on having thrown off the yoke, he honestly admits that Saint Simon's influence has been of powerful service in his philosophic education. 'I certainly,' he writes to his most intimate friend, 'am under great personal obligations to Saint Simon; that is to say, he helped in a powerful degree to launch me in the philosophical direction that I have now definitely marked out for myself, and that I shall follow without looking back for the rest of my life.' Even if there were no such unmistakable expressions as these, the most cursory glance into Saint Simon's writings is enough to reveal the thread of connection between the ingenious visionary and and systematic thinker. We see the debt, and we also see that when it is stated at the highest possible, nothing has really been taken either from Comte's claims as a powerful original thinker, or from his immeasurable pre-eminence over Saint Simon in intellectual grasp and vigour and coherence. As high a degree of originality may be shown in transformation as in invention, as Molière and Shakespeare have proved in the region of dramatic art. In philo-

sophy the conditions are not different. *Il faut prendre son bien où on le trouve.*

It is no detriment to Comte's fame that some of the ideas which he recombined and incorporated in a great philosophic structure had their origin in ideas that were produced almost at random in the incessant fermentation of Saint Simon's brain. Comte is in no true sense a follower of Saint Simon, but it was undoubtedly Saint Simon who launched him, to take Comte's own word, by suggesting to his strong and penetrating mind the two starting-points of what grew into the Comtist system—first, that political phenomena are as capable of being grouped under laws as other phenomena; and second, that the true destination of philosophy must be social, and the true object of the thinker must be the reorganisation of the moral, religious, and political systems. We can readily see what an impulse these far-reaching conceptions would give to Comte's meditations. There were conceptions of less importance than these, in which it is impossible not to feel that it was Saint Simon's wrong or imperfect idea that put his young admirer on the track to a right and perfected idea. The subject is not worthy of further discussion. That Comte would have performed some great intellectual achievement, if Saint Simon had never been born, is certain. It is hardly less certain that the great achievement which he did actually perform was originally set in motion by Saint Simon's conversation, though it was afterwards directly filiated

with the fertile speculations of Turgot and Condorcet. Comte thought almost as meanly of Plato as he did of Saint Simon, and he considered Aristotle the prince of all true thinkers; yet their vital difference about Ideas did not prevent Aristotle from calling Plato master.

After six years the differences between the old and the young philosopher grew too marked for friendship. Comte began to fret under Saint Simon's pretensions to be his director. Saint Simon, on the other hand, perhaps began to feel uncomfortably conscious of the superiority of his disciple. The occasion of the breach between them (1824) was an attempt on Saint Simon's part to print a production of Comte's as if it were in some sort connected with Saint Simon's schemes of social reorganisation. Comte was never a man to quarrel by halves, and not only was the breach not repaired, but long afterwards Comte, as we have said, with painful ungraciousness took to calling the encourager of his youth by very hard names.

In 1825 Comte married. His marriage was one of those of which 'magnanimity owes no account to prudence,' and it did not turn out prosperously. His family were strongly Catholic and royalist, and they were outraged by his refusal to have the marriage performed other than civilly. They consented, however, to receive his wife, and the pair went on a visit to Montpellier. Madame Comte conceived a dislike to the circle she found there, and this was the too

early beginning of disputes which lasted for the remainder of their union. In the year of his marriage we find Comte writing to the most intimate of his correspondents:—'I have nothing left but to concentrate my whole moral existence in my intellectual work, a precious but inadequate compensation; and so I must give up, if not the most dazzling, still the sweetest part of my happiness.' We cannot help admiring the heroism which cherishes great ideas in the midst of petty miseries, and intrepidly throws all squalid interruptions into the background which is their true place. Still, we may well suppose that the sordid cares that come with want of money made a harmonious life none the more easy. Comte tried to find pupils to board with him, but only one pupil came, and he was soon sent away for lack of companions. 'I would rather spend an evening,' wrote the needy enthusiast, 'in solving a difficult question, than in running after some empty-headed and consequential millionaire in search of a pupil.' A little money was earned by an occasional article in *Le Producteur*, in which he began to expound the philosophic ideas that were now maturing in his mind. He announced a course of lectures (1826), which it was hoped would bring money as well as fame, and which were to be the first dogmatic exposition of the Positive Philosophy. A friend had said to him, 'You talk too freely, your ideas are getting abroad, and other people use them without giving you the credit; put your ownership on record.' The lectures were

intended to do this among other things, and they attracted hearers so eminent as Humboldt the cosmologist, as Poinsot the geometer, as Blainville the physiologist.

Unhappily, after the third lecture of the course, Comte had a severe attack of cerebral derangement, brought on by intense and prolonged meditation, acting on a system that was already irritated by the chagrin of domestic failure. He did not recover his health for more than a year, and as soon as convalescence set in he was seized by so profound a melancholy at the disaster which had thus overtaken him, that he threw himself into the Seine. Fortunately he was rescued, and the shock did not stay his return to mental soundness. One incident of this painful episode is worth mentioning. Lamennais, then in the height of his Catholic exaltation, persuaded Comte's mother to insist on her son being married with the religious ceremony, and as the younger Madame Comte apparently did not resist, the rite was duly performed, in spite of the fact that the unfortunate man was at the time neither more nor less than raving mad. To such shocking conspiracies against common sense and decency does ecclesiastical zealotry bring even good men like Lamennais. On the other hand, philosophic assailants of Comtism have not always resisted the temptation to recall the circumstance that its founder was once out of his mind,—an unworthy and irrelevant device, that cannot be excused even by the provocation of Comte's own occa-

sional acerbity. As has been justly said, if Newton once suffered a cerebral attack without on that account forfeiting our veneration for the *Principia*, Comte may have suffered in the same way, and still not have forfeited our respect for what is good in the systems of Positive Philosophy and Positive Polity.

In 1828 the lectures were renewed, and in 1830 was published the first volume of the *Course of Positive Philosophy*. The sketch and ground plan of this great undertaking had appeared in 1826. The sixth and last volume was published in 1842. The twelve years covering the publication of the first of Comte's two elaborate works were years of indefatigable toil, and they were the only portion of his life in which he enjoyed a certain measure, and that a very modest measure, of material prosperity. In 1833 he was appointed examiner of the boys in the various provincial schools who aspired to enter the École Polytechnique at Paris. This and two other engagements as a teacher of mathematics secured him an income of some £400 a year. He made M. Guizot, then Louis Philippe's minister, the important proposal to establish a chair of general history of the sciences. If there are four chairs, he argued, devoted to the history of philosophy, that is to say, the minute study of all sorts of dreams and aberrations through the ages, surely there ought to be at least one to explain the formation and progress of our real knowledge? This wise suggestion, which still remains to be acted upon, was at first welcomed, according to

Comte's own account, by Guizot's philosophic instinct, and then repulsed by his 'metaphysical rancour.'

Meanwhile Comte did his official work conscientiously, sorely as he grudged the time which it took from the execution of the great object of his thoughts. We cannot forbear to transcribe one delighful and touching trait in connection with this part of Comte's life. 'I hardly know if even to you,' he writes in the expansion of domestic confidence to his wife, 'I dare disclose the sweet and softened feeling that comes over me when I find a young man whose examination is thoroughly satisfactory. Yes, though you may smile, the emotion would easily stir me to tears if I were not carefully on my guard.' Such sympathy with youthful hope, in union with the industry and intelligence that are the only means of bringing the hope to fulfilment, shows that Comte's dry and austere manner veiled the fires of a generous social emotion. It was this which made the overworked student take upon himself the burden of delivering every year from 1831 to 1848 a course of gratuitous lectures on astronomy for a popular audience. The social feeling that inspired this disinterested act showed itself in other ways. He suffered the penalty of imprisonment rather than serve in the national guard; his position was that though he would not take arms against the new monarchy of July, yet being a republican he would take no oath to defend it. The only amusement that Comte permitted himself was a visit to the opera. In his

youth he had been a playgoer, but he shortly came to the conclusion that tragedy is a stilted and bombastic art, and after a time comedy interested him no more than tragedy. For the opera he had a genuine passion, which he gratified as often as he could, until his means became too narrow to afford even that single relaxation.

Of his manner and personal appearance we have the following account from one who was his pupil:— 'Daily as the clock struck eight on the horologe of the Luxembourg, while the ringing hammer on the bell was yet audible, the door of my room opened, and there entered a man, short, rather stout, almost what one might call sleek, freshly shaven, without vestige of whisker or moustache. He was invariably dressed in a suit of the most spotless black, as if going to a dinner party; his white neckcloth was fresh from the laundress's hands, and his hat shining like a racer's coat. He advanced to the arm-chair prepared for him in the centre of the writing-table, laid his hat on the left-hand corner; his snuff-box was deposited on the same side beside the quire of paper placed in readiness for his use, and dipping the pen twice into the ink-bottle, then bringing it to within an inch of his nose, to make sure it was properly filled, he broke silence: "We have said that the chord AB," etc. For three quarters of an hour he continued his demonstration, making short notes as he went on, to guide the listener in repeating the problem alone; then, taking up another cahier which

lay beside him, he went over the written repetition of the former lesson. He explained, corrected, or commented till the clock struck nine; then, with the little finger of the right hand brushing from his coat and waistcoat the shower of superfluous snuff which had fallen on them, he pocketed his snuff-box, and resuming his hat, he as silently as when he came in made his exit by the door which I rushed to open for him.'

In 1842, as we have said, the last volume of the *Positive Philosophy* was given to the public. Instead of that contentment which we like to picture as the reward of twelve years of meritorious toil devoted to the erection of a high philosophic edifice, the author of this great contribution found himself in the midst of a very sea of small troubles. And they were troubles of that uncompensated kind that harass without elevating, and waste a man's spirit without softening or enlarging it. First, the jar of temperament between Comte and his wife had become so unbearable that they separated (1842). It is not expedient for strangers to attempt to allot blame in such cases, for it is impossible for strangers to know all the deciding circumstances. We need only say that in spite of one or two disadvantageous facts in her career which do not concern the public, Madame Comte seems to have uniformly comported herself towards her husband with an honourable solicitude for his wellbeing. Comte made her an annual allowance, and for some years after the separation they

corresponded on friendly terms. Next in the list of the vexations that greeted Comte on emerging from the long tunnel of philosophising was a lawsuit with his publisher. The publisher had impertinently inserted in the sixth volume a protest against a certain foot-note, in which Comte had used some hard words about M. Arago. Comte threw himself into the suit with an energy worthy of Voltaire, and he won it. Third, and worst of all, he had prefixed a preface to the sixth volume, in which he deliberately went out of his way to rouse the active enmity of the very men on whom depended his annual re-election to the post of examiner for the Polytechnic School. The result of this perversity was that by and by he lost the appointment, and with it one half of his very modest income. This was the occasion of an episode, which is of more than merely personal interest.

Before 1842 Comte had been in correspondence with our distinguished countryman, J. S. Mill. Mr. Mill had been greatly impressed by Comte's philosophic ideas; he admits that his own *System of Logic* owes many valuable thoughts to Comte, and that, in the portion of that work which treats of the logic of the moral sciences, a radical improvement in the conceptions of logical method was derived from the *Positive Philosophy*. Their correspondence, which was extremely full and copious, and which we may hope will one day be made accessible to the public, turned principally upon the two great questions of the equality between men and women, and of the expediency and

constitution of a sacerdotal or spiritual order. When Comte found himself straitened, he confided the entire circumstances to his English friend. As might be supposed by those who know the affectionate anxiety with which Mr. Mill regarded the welfare of any one whom he believed to be doing good work in the world, he at once took pains to have Comte's loss of income made up to him, until Comte should have had time to repair that loss by his own endeavour. Mr. Mill persuaded Grote, Molesworth, and Raikes Currie to advance the sum of £240. At the end of the year (that is in 1845) Comte had taken no steps to enable himself to dispense with the aid of the three Englishmen. Mr. Mill applied to them again, but with the exception of Grote, who sent a small sum, they gave Comte to understand that they expected him to earn his own living. Mr. Mill had suggested to Comte that he should write articles for the English periodicals, and expressed his own willingness to translate any such articles from the French. Comte at first fell in with the plan, but he speedily surprised and disconcerted Mr. Mill by boldly taking up the position of 'high moral magistrate,' and accusing the three defaulting contributors of a scandalous falling away from righteousness and a high mind. Mr. Mill was chilled by these pretensions; they struck him as savouring of a totally unexpected charlatanry; and the correspondence came to an end. For Comte's position in the argument one feels that there is much to be said. If you have good reason for believing that a given

thinker is doing work that will destroy the official system of science or philosophy, and if you desire its destruction, then you may fairly be asked to help to provide for him the same kind of material freedom that is secured to the professors and propagators of the official system by the state or by the universities. And if it is a fine thing for a man to leave money behind him in the shape of an endowment for the support of a scientific teacher of whom he has never heard, why should it not be just as natural and as laudable to give money, while he is yet alive, to a teacher whom he both knows and approves of? On the other hand, Grote and Molesworth might say that, for anything they could tell, they would find themselves to be helping the construction of a system of which they utterly disapproved. And, as things turned out, they would have been perfectly justified in this serious apprehension. To have done anything to make the production of the *Positive Polity* easier would have been no ground for anything but remorse to any of the three. It is just to Comte to remark that he always assumed that the contributors to the support of a thinker should be in all essentials of method and doctrine that thinker's disciples; aid from indifferent persons he counted irrational and humiliating. But is an endowment ever a blessing to the man who receives it? The question is difficult to answer generally; in Comte's case there is reason in the doubts felt by Madame Comte as to the expediency of relieving the philosopher from the necessity of being

in plain and business-like relations with indifferent persons for a certain number of hours in the week. Such relations do as much as a doctrine to keep egoism within decent bounds, and they must be not only a relief, but a wholesome corrective to the tendencies of concentrated thinking on abstract subjects.

What finally happened was this. From 1845 to 1848 Comte lived as best he could, as well as made his wife her allowance, on an income of £200 a year. We need scarcely say that he was rigorously thrifty. His little account books of income and outlay, with every item entered down to a few hours before his death, are accurate and neat enough to have satisfied an ancient Roman householder. In 1848, through no fault of his own, his salary was reduced to £80. M. Littré and others, with Comte's approval, published an appeal for subscriptions, and on the money thus contributed Comte subsisted for the remaining nine years of his life. By 1852 the subsidy produced as much as £200 a year. It is worth noticing, after the story we have told, that Mr. Mill was one of the subscribers, and that M. Littré continued his assistance after he had been driven from Comte's society by his high pontifical airs. We are sorry not to be able to record any similar trait of magnanimity on Comte's part. His character, admirable as it is for firmness, for intensity, for inexorable will, for iron devotion to what he thought the service of mankind, yet offers few of those softening qualities that make us love good men and pity bad ones. He is of the type of

Brutus or of Cato—a model of austere fixity of purpose, but ungracious, domineering, and not quite free from petty bitterness.

If you seek to place yourself in sympathy with Comte it is best to think of him only as the intellectual worker, pursuing in uncomforted obscurity the laborious and absorbing task to which he had given up his whole life. His singularly conscientious fashion of elaborating his ideas made the mental strain more intense than even so exhausting a work as the abstract exposition of the principles of positive science need have been, if he had followed a more self-indulgent plan. He did not write down a word until he had first composed the whole matter in his mind. When he had thoroughly meditated every sentence, he sat down to write, and then, such was the grip of his memory, the exact order of his thoughts came back to him as if without an effort, and he wrote down precisely what he had intended to write, without the aid of a note or a memorandum, and without check or pause. For example, he began and completed in about six weeks a chapter in the *Positive Philosophy* (vol. v. ch. lv.), which would fill forty of the large pages of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Even if his subject had been merely narrative or descriptive, this would be a very satisfactory piece of continuous production. When we reflect that the chapter in question is not narrative, but an abstract exposition of the guiding principles of the movements of several centuries, with many threads of complex thought running along side by

side all through the speculation, then the circumstances under which it was reduced to literary form are really astonishing. It is hardly possible for a critic to share the admiration expressed by some of Comte's disciples for his style. We are not so unreasonable as to blame him for failing to make his pages picturesque or thrilling; we do not want sunsets and stars and roses and ecstasy; but there is a certain standard for the most serious and abstract subjects. When compared with such philosophic writing as Hume's, Diderot's, Berkeley's, then Comte's manner is heavy, laboured, monotonous, without relief and without light. There is now and then an energetic phrase, but as a whole the vocabulary is jejune; the sentences are overloaded; the pitch is flat. A scrupulous insistence on making his meaning clear led to an iteration of certain adjectives and adverbs, which at length deaden the effect beyond the endurance of all but the most resolute students. Only the profound and stimulating interest of much of the matter prevents one from thinking of Rivarol's ill-natured remark upon Condorcet, that he wrote with opium on a page of lead. The general effect is impressive, not by any virtues of style, for we do not discern one, but by reason of the magnitude and importance of the undertaking, and the visible conscientiousness and the grasp with which it is executed. It is by sheer strength of thought, by the vigorous perspicacity with which he strikes the lines of cleavage of his subject, that he makes his way into the mind of the reader; in the presence of gifts

of this power we need not quarrel with an ungainly style.

Comte pursued one practice which ought to be mentioned in connection with his personal history, the practice of what he styled *hygiène cérébrale*. After he had acquired what he considered to be a sufficient stock of material, and this happened before he had completed the *Positive Philosophy*, he abstained deliberately and scrupulously from reading newspapers, reviews, scientific transactions, and everything else whatever, except two or three poets (notably Dante) and the *Imitatio Christi*. It is true that his friends kept him informed of what was going on in the scientific world. Still this partial divorce of himself from the record of the social and scientific activity of his time, though it may save a thinker from the deplorable evils of dispersion, moral and intellectual, accounts in no small measure for the exaggerated egoism, and the absence of all feeling for reality, which marked Comte's later days.

Only one important incident in Comte's life now remains to be spoken of. In 1845 he made the acquaintance of Madame Clotilde de Vaux, a lady whose husband had been sent to the galleys for life, and who was therefore, in all but the legal incidents of her position, a widow. Very little is known about her qualities. She wrote a little piece which Comte rated so preposterously as to talk about George Sand in the same sentence; it is in truth a flimsy performance, though it contains one or two gracious thoughts.

There is true beauty in the saying—'*It is unworthy of a noble nature to diffuse its pain.*' Madame de Vaux's letters speak well for her good sense and good feeling, and it would have been better for Comte's later work if she had survived to exert a wholesome restraint on his exaltation. Their friendship had only lasted a year when she died (1846), but the period was long enough to give her memory a supreme ascendency in Comte's mind. Condillac, Joubert, Mill, and other eminent men have shown what the intellectual ascendency of a woman can be. Comte was as inconsolable after Madame de Vaux's death as D'Alembert after the death of Mademoiselle L'Espinasse. Every Wednesday afternoon he made a reverential pilgrimage to her tomb, and three times every day he invoked her memory in words of passionate expansion. His disciples believe that in time the world will reverence Comte's sentiment about Clotilde de Vaux, as it reverences Dante's adoration of Beatrice—a parallel that Comte himself was the first to hit upon. It is no doubt the worst kind of cynicism to make a mock in a realistic vein of any personality that has set in motion the idealising thaumaturgy of the affections. Yet we cannot help feeling that it is a grotesque and unseemly anachronism to apply in grave prose, addressed to the whole world, those terms of saint and angel which are touching and in their place amid the trouble and passion of the great mystic poet. Only an energetic and beautiful imagination, together with a mastery of the rhythm and swell of impassioned

speech, can prevent an invitation to the public to hearken to the raptures of intense personal attachment from seeming ludicrous and almost indecent. Whatever other gifts Comte may have had—and he had many of the rarest kind,—poetic imagination was not among them, any more than poetic or emotional expression was among them. His was one of those natures whose faculty of deep feeling is unhappily doomed to be inarticulate, and to pass away without the magic power of transmitting itself.

Comte lost no time, after the completion of his *Course of Positive Philosophy*, in proceeding with the *System of Positive Polity*, to which the earlier work was designed to be a foundation. The first volume was published in 1851, and the fourth and last in 1854. In 1848, when the political air was charged with stimulating elements, he founded the Positive Society, with the expectation that it might grow into a reunion as powerful over the new revolution as the Jacobin Club had been in the revolution of 1789. The hope was not fulfilled, but a certain number of philosophic disciples gathered round Comte, and eventually formed themselves, under the guidance of the new ideas of the latter half of his life, into a kind of church. In the years 1849, 1850, and 1851, Comte gave three courses of lectures at the Palais Royal. They were gratuitous and popular, and in them he boldly advanced the whole of his doctrine, as well as the direct and immediate pretensions of himself and his system. The third course ended in the following

uncompromising terms—'In the name of the Past and of the Future, the servants of Humanity—both its philosophical and its practical servants—come forward to claim as their due the general direction of this world. Their object is to constitute at length a real Providence in all departments,—moral, intellectual, and material. Consequently they exclude once for all from political supremacy all the different servants of God—Catholic, Protestant, or Deist—as being at once behindhand and a cause of disturbance.' A few weeks after this invitation a very different person stepped forward to constitute himself a real Providence.

In 1852 Comte published the *Catechism of Positivism*. In the preface to it he took occasion to express his approval of Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of the 2d of December,—'a fortunate crisis which has set aside the parliamentary system, and instituted a dictatorial republic.' Whatever we may think of the political sagacity of such a judgment, it is due to Comte to say that he did not expect to see his dictatorial republic transformed into a dynastic empire, and, next, that he did expect from the Man of December freedom of the press and of public meeting. His later hero was the Emperor Nicholas, 'the only statesman in Christendom,'—as unlucky a judgment as that which placed Dr. Francia in the Comtist Calendar.

In 1857 he was attacked by cancer, and died peaceably on the 5th of September of that year. The anniversary is always celebrated by ceremonial gather-

ings of his French and English followers, who then commemorate the name and the services of the founder of their religion. Comte was under sixty when he died. We cannot help reflecting that one of the worst of all the evils connected with the shortness of human life is the impatience which it breeds in some of the most ardent and enlightened minds to hurry on the execution of projects, for which neither the time nor the spirit of their author is fully ripe.

In proceeding to give an outline of Comte's system, we shall consider the *Positive Polity* as the more or less legitimate sequel of the *Positive Philosophy*, notwithstanding the deep gulf which so eminent a critic as Mr. Mill insisted upon fixing between the earlier and the later work.[1] There may be, as we think

[1] The English reader is specially well placed for satisfying such curiosity as he may have about Comte's philosophy. Miss Martineau condensed the six volumes of the *Philosophie Positive* into two volumes of excellent English (1853); Comte himself gave them a place in the Positivist Library. The *Catechism* was translated by Dr. Congreve in 1858. The *Politique Positive* has been reproduced in English (Longmans, 1875-1877) by the conscientious labour of Comte's London followers. This translation is accompanied by a careful running analysis and explanatory summary of contents, which make the work more readily intelligible than the original. For criticisms, the reader may be referred to Mr. Mill's *Auguste Comte and Positivism;* Dr. Bridges's reply to Mr. Mill, *The Unity of Comte's Life and Doctrines* (1866); Mr. Herbert Spencer's essay on the *Genesis of Science*, and pamphlet on *The Classification of the Sciences;* Professor Huxley's 'Scientific Aspects of Positivism,' in his *Lay Sermons;* Dr. Congreve's *Essays Political, Social, and Religious* (1874); Mr. Fiske's *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874); Mr. Lewes's *History of Philosophy*, vol. ii.

there is, the greatest difference in their value, and the temper is not the same, nor the method. But the two are quite capable of being regarded, and for the purposes of an account of Comte's career ought to be regarded, as an integral whole. His letters when he was a young man of one and twenty, and before he had published a word, show how strongly present the social motive was in his mind, and in what little account he should hold his scientific works, if he did not perpetually think of their utility for the species. 'I feel,' he wrote, 'that such scientific reputation as I might acquire would give more value, more weight, more useful influence to my political sermons.' In 1822 he published a *Plan of the Scientific Works necessary to Reorganise Society.* In this opuscule he points out that modern society is passing through a great crisis, due to the conflict of two opposing movements,—the first, a disorganising movement owing to the break-up of old institutions and beliefs; the second, a movement towards a definite social state, in which all means of human prosperity will receive their most complete development and most direct application. How is this crisis to be dealt with? What are the undertakings necessary in order to pass successfully through it towards an organic state? The answer to this is that there are two series of works. The first is theoretic or spiritual, aiming at the development of a new principle of co-ordinating social relations and the formation of the system of general ideas which are destined to

guide society. The second work is practical or temporal; it settles the distribution of power and the institutions that are most conformable to the spirit of the system which has previously been thought out in the course of the theoretic work. As the practical work depends on the conclusions of the theoretical, the latter must obviously come first in order of execution.

In 1826 this was pushed further in a most remarkable piece called *Considerations on the Spiritual Power*—the main object of which is to demonstrate the necessity of instituting a spiritual power, distinct from the temporal power and independent of it. In examining the conditions of a spiritual power proper for modern times, he indicates in so many terms the presence in his mind of a direct analogy between his proposed spiritual power and the functions of the Catholic clergy at the time of its greatest vigour and most complete independence,—that is to say, from about the middle of the eleventh century until towards the end of the thirteenth. He refers to De Maistre's memorable book, *Du Pape*, as the most profound, accurate, and methodical account of the old spiritual organisation, and starts from that as the model to be adapted to the changed intellectual and social conditions of the modern time. In the *Positive Philosophy*, again (vol. v. p. 344), he distinctly says that Catholicism, reconstituted as a system on new intellectual foundations, would finally preside over the spiritual reorganisation of modern society. Much else could easily be quoted

to the same effect. If unity of career, then, means that Comte from the beginning designed the institution of a spiritual power and the systematic reorganisation of life, it is difficult to deny him whatever credit that unity may be worth, and the credit is perhaps not particularly great. Even the re-adaptation of the Catholic system to a scientific doctrine was plainly in his mind thirty years before the final execution of the *Positive Polity*, though it is difficult to believe that he foresaw the religious mysticism in which the task was to land him. A great analysis was to precede a great synthesis, but it was the synthesis on which Comte's vision was centred from the first. Let us first sketch the nature of the analysis. Society is to be reorganised on the base of knowledge. What is the sum and significance of knowledge? That is the question which Comte's first master-work professes to answer.

The *Positive Philosophy* opens with the statement of a certain law of which Comte was the discoverer, and which has always been treated both by disciples and dissidents as the key to his system. This is the Law of the Three States. It is as follows. Each of our leading conceptions, each branch of our knowledge, passes successively through three different phases; there are three different ways in which the human mind explains phenomena, each way following the other in order. These three stages are the Theological, the Metaphysical, and the Positive. Knowledge, or a branch of knowledge, is in the Theological state,

when it supposes the phenomena under consideration to be due to immediate volition, either in the object or in some supernatural being. In the Metaphysical state, for volition is substituted abstract force residing in the object, yet existing independently of the object; the phenomena are viewed as if apart from the bodies manifesting them; and the properties of each substance have attributed to them an existence distinct from that substance. In the Positive state inherent volition or external volition and inherent force or abstraction personified have both disappeared from men's minds, and the explanation of a phenomenon means a reference of it, by way of succession or resemblance, to some other phenomenon,—means the establishment of a relation between the given fact and some more general fact. In the Theological and Metaphysical state men seek a cause or an essence; in the Positive they are content with a law. To borrow an illustration from an able English disciple of Comte:—'Take the phenomenon of the sleep produced by opium. The Arabs are content to attribute it to the "will of God." Molière's medical student accounts for it by a *soporific principle* contained in the opium. The modern physiologist knows that he cannot account for it at all. He can simply observe, analyse, and experiment upon the phenomena attending the action of the drug, and classify it with other agents analogous in character' (*Dr. Bridges*).

The first and greatest aim of the Positive Philosophy is to advance the study of society into the third of

the three stages,—to remove social phenomena from the sphere of theological and metaphysical conceptions, and to introduce among them the same scientific observation of their laws which has given us physics, chemistry, physiology. Social physics will consist of the conditions and relations of the facts of society, and will have two departments,—one statical, containing the laws of order; the other dynamical, containing the laws of progress. While men's minds were in the theological state, political events, for example, were explained by the will of the gods, and political authority based on divine right. In the metaphysical state of mind, then, to retain our instance, political authority was based on the sovereignty of the people, and social facts were explained by the figment of a falling away from a state of nature. When the positive method has been finally extended to society, as it has been to chemistry and physiology, these social facts will be resolved, as their ultimate analysis, into relations with one another, and instead of seeking causes in the old sense of the word, men will only examine the conditions of social existence. When that stage has been reached not merely the greater part, but the whole, of our knowledge will be impressed with one character—the character, namely, of positivity or scientificalness; and all our conceptions in every part of knowledge will be thoroughly homogeneous. The gains of such a change are enormous. The new philosophical unity will now in its turn regenerate all the elements that went to its own

formation. The mind will pursue knowledge without the wasteful jar and friction of conflicting methods and mutually hostile conceptions; education will be regenerated; and society will reorganise itself on the only possible solid base—a homogeneous philosophy.

The *Positive Philosophy* has another object besides the demonstration of the necessity and propriety of a science of society. This object is to show the sciences as branches from a single trunk,—is to give to science the ensemble or spirit of generality hitherto confined to philosophy, and to give to philosophy the rigour and solidity of science. Comte's special object is a study of social physics, a science that before his advent was still to be formed; his second object is a review of the methods and leading generalities of all the positive sciences already formed, so that we may know both what system of inquiry to follow in our new science, and also where the new science will stand in relation to other knowledge.

The first step in this direction is to arrange scientific method and positive knowledge in order, and this brings us to another cardinal element in the Comtist system, the classification of the sciences. In the front of the inquiry lies one main division, that, namely, between speculative and practical knowledge. With the latter we have no concern. Speculative or theoretic knowledge is divided into abstract and concrete. The former is concerned with the laws that regulate phenomena in all conceivable cases; the latter is concerned with the application of these laws.

Concrete science relates to objects or beings; abstract science to events. The former is particular or descriptive; the latter is general. Thus, physiology is an abstract science; but zoology is concrete. Chemistry is abstract; mineralogy is concrete. It is the method and knowledge of the abstract sciences that the Positive Philosophy has to reorganise in a great whole.

Comte's principle of classification is that the dependence and order of scientific study follows the dependence of the phenomena. Thus, as has been said, it represents both the objective dependence of the phenomena and the subjective dependence of our means of knowing them. The more particular and complex phenomena depend upon the simpler and more general. The latter are the more easy to study. Therefore science will begin with those attributes of objects which are most general, and pass on gradually to other attributes that are combined in greater complexity. Thus, too, each science rests on the truths of the sciences that precede it, while it adds to them the truths by which it is itself constituted. Comte's series or hierarchy is arranged as follows:—(1) Mathematics (that is, number, geometry, and mechanics), (2) Astronomy, (3) Physics, (4) Chemistry, (5) Biology, (6) Sociology. Each of the members of this series is one degree more special than the member before it, and depends upon the facts of all the members preceding it, and cannot be fully understood without them. It follows that the crowning science of the

hierarchy, dealing with the phenomena of human society, will remain longest under the influence of theological dogmas and abstract figments, and will be the last to pass into the positive stage. You cannot discover the relations of the facts of human society without reference to the conditions of animal life; you cannot understand the conditions of animal life without the laws of chemistry; and so with the rest.

This arrangement of the sciences and the Law of the Three States are together explanatory of the course of human thought and knowledge. They are thus the double key of Comte's systematisation of the philosophy of all the sciences from mathematics to physiology, and his analysis of social evolution, which is the basis of sociology. Each science contributes its philosophy. The co-ordination of all these partial philosophies produces the general Positive Philosophy. 'Thousands had cultivated science, and with splendid success; not one had conceived the philosophy which the sciences when organised would naturally evolve. A few had seen the necessity of extending the scientific method to all inquiries, but no one had seen how this was to be effected. . . . The Positive Philosophy is novel as a philosophy, not as a collection of truths never before suspected. Its novelty is the organisation of existing elements. Its very principle implies the absorption of all that great thinkers had achieved; while incorporating their results it extended their methods. . . . What tradition brought was the results; what Comte

brought was the organisation of these results. He always claimed to be the founder of the Positive Philosophy. That he had every right to such a title is demonstrable to all who distinguish between the positive sciences and the philosophy which co-ordinated the truths and methods of these sciences into a doctrine' (*G. H. Lewes*).

We may interrupt our short exposition here to remark that Comte's classification of the sciences has been subjected to a vigorous criticism by Mr. Herbert Spencer. Mr. Spencer's two chief points are these:— (1) He denies that the principle of the development of the sciences is the principle of decreasing generality; he asserts that there are as many examples of the advent of a science being determined by increasing generality as by increasing speciality. (2) He holds that any grouping of the sciences in a succession gives a radically wrong idea of their genesis and their interdependence; no true filiation exists; no science develops itself in isolation; no one is independent, either logically or historically. M. Littré, by far the most eminent of the scientific followers of Comte, concedes a certain force to Mr. Spencer's objections, and makes certain secondary modifications in the hierarchy in consequence, while still cherishing his faith in the Comtist theory of the sciences. Mr. Mill, while admitting the objections as good, if Comte's arrangement pretended to be the only one possible, still holds that arrangement as tenable for the purpose with which it was devised. Mr. Lewes asserts

against Mr. Spencer that the arrangement in a series is necessary, on grounds similar to those which require that the various truths constituting a science should be systematically co-ordinated, although in nature the phenomena are intermingled.

The first three volumes of the *Positive Philosophy* contain an exposition of the partial philosophies of the five sciences that precede sociology in the hierarchy. Their value has usually been placed very low by the special followers of the sciences concerned; they say that the knowledge is second-hand, is not coherent, and is too confidently taken for final. The Comtist replies that the task is philosophic, and is not to be judged by the minute accuracies of science. In these three volumes Comte took the sciences roughly as he found them. His eminence as a man of science must be measured by his only original work in that department,—the construction, namely, of the new science of society. This work is accomplished in the last three volumes of the *Positive Philosophy* and the second and third volumes of the *Positive Polity*. The Comtist maintains that even if these five volumes together fail in laying down correctly and finally the lines of the new science, still they are the first solution of a great problem hitherto unattempted. 'Modern biology has got beyond Aristotle's conception; but in the construction of the biological science, not even the most unphilosophical biologist would fail to recognise the value of Aristotle's attempt. So for sociology. Subsequent sociologists may have conceiv-

ably to remodel the whole science, yet not the less will they recognise the merit of the first work which has facilitated their labours' (*Congreve*).

We shall now briefly describe Comte's principal conceptions in sociology, his position in respect to which is held by himself, and by others, to raise him to the level of Descartes or Leibnitz. Of course the first step was to approach the phenomena of human character and social existence with the expectation of finding them as reducible to general laws as the other phenomena of the universe, and with the hope of exploring these laws by the same instruments of observation and verification as had done such triumphant work in the case of the latter. Comte separates the collective facts of society and history from the individual phenomena of biology; then he withdraws these collective facts from the region of external volition, and places them in the region of law. The facts of history must be explained, not by providential interventions, but by referring them to conditions inherent in the successive stages of social existence. This conception makes a science of society possible. What is the method? It comprises, besides observation and experiment (which is, in fact, only the observation of abnormal social states), a certain peculiarity of verification. We begin by deducing every well-known historical situation from the series of its antecedents. Thus we acquire a body of empirical generalisations as to social phenomena, and then we connect the generalisations with the positive theory

of human nature. A sociological demonstration lies in the establishment of an accordance between the conclusions of historical analysis and the preparatory conceptions of biological theory. As Mr. Mill puts it:—'If a sociological theory, collected from historical evidence, contradicts the established general laws of human nature; if (to use M. Comte's instances) it implies, in the mass of mankind, any very decided natural bent, either in a good or in a bad direction; if it supposes that the reason, in average human beings, predominates over the desires or the disinterested desires over the personal,—we may know that history has been misinterpreted, and that the theory is false. On the other hand, if laws of social phenomena, empirically generalised from history, can, when once suggested, be affiliated to the known laws of human nature; if the direction actually taken by the developments and changes of human society can be seen to be such as the properties of man and of his dwelling-place made antecedently probable, the empirical generalisations are raised into positive laws, and sociology becomes a science.' The result of this method is an exhibition of the events of human experience in co-ordinated series that manifest their own graduated connection.

Next, as all investigation proceeds from that which is known best to that which is unknown or less well known, and as, in social states, it is the collective phenomenon that is more easy of access to the observer than its parts, therefore we must consider

and pursue all the elements of a given social state together and in common. The social organisation must be viewed and explored as a whole. There is a nexus between each leading group of social phenomena and other leading groups; if there is a change in one of them, that change is accompanied by a corresponding modification of all the rest. 'Not only must political institutions and social manners on the one hand, and manners and ideas on the other, be always mutually connected; but further, this consolidated whole must be always connected by its nature with the corresponding state of the integral development of humanity, considered in all its aspects of intellectual, moral and physical activity' (*Comte*).

Is there any one element which communicates the decisive impulse to all the rest,—any predominating agency in the course of social evolution? The answer is that all the other parts of social existence are associated with, and drawn along by, the contemporary condition of intellectual development. The Reason is the superior and preponderant element which settles the direction in which all the other faculties shall expand. 'It is only through the more and more marked influence of the reason over the general conduct of man and of society that the gradual march of our race has attained that regularity and persevering continuity which distinguish it so radically from the desultory and barren expansion of even the highest animal orders, which share, and with enhanced strength, the appetites, the passions, and even the

primary sentiments of man.' The history of intellectual development, therefore, is the key to social evolution, and the key to the history of intellectual development is the Law of the Three States.

Among other central thoughts in Comte's explanation of history are these:—The displacement of theological by positive conceptions has been accompanied by a gradual rise of an industrial *régime* out of the military *régime*;—the great permanent contribution of Catholicism was the separation which it set up between the temporal and the spiritual powers;—the progress of the race consists in the increasing preponderance of the distinctively human elements over the animal elements;—the absolute tendency of ordinary social theories will be replaced by an unfailing adherence to the relative point of view, and from this it follows that the social state, regarded as a whole, has been as perfect in each period as the co-existing condition of humanity and its environment would allow.

The elaboration of these ideas in relation to the history of the civilisation of the most advanced portion of the human race occupies two of the volumes of the *Positive Philosophy*, and has been accepted by competent persons of very different schools as a masterpiece of rich, luminous, and far-reaching suggestion. Whatever additions it may receive, and whatever corrections it may require, this analysis of social evolution will continue to be regarded as one of the great achievements of human intellect. The demand

for the first of Comte's two works has gone on increasing in a significant degree. It was completed, as we have said, in 1842. A second edition was published in 1864; a third some years afterwards; and while we write (1876) a fourth is in the press. Three editions within twelve years of a work of abstract philosophy in six considerable volumes are the measure of a very striking influence. On the whole, we may suspect that no part of Comte's works has had so much to do with this marked success as his survey and review of the course of history.

The third volume of the later work, the *Positive Polity*, treats of social dynamics, and takes us again over the ground of historic evolution. It abounds with remarks of extraordinary fertility and comprehensiveness; but it is often arbitrary; its views of the past are strained into coherence with the statical views of the preceding volume; and so far as concerns the period to which the present writer happens to have given special attention, it is usually slight and sometimes random. As it was composed in rather less than six months, and as the author honestly warns us that he has given all his attention to a more profound co-ordination, instead of working out the special explanations more fully, as he had promised, we need not be surprised if the result is disappointing to those who had mastered the corresponding portion of the *Positive Philosophy*. Comte explains the difference between his two works. In the first his 'chief object was to discover and demon-

strate the laws of progress, and to exhibit in one unbroken sequence the collective destinies of mankind, till then invariably regarded as a series of events wholly beyond the reach of explanation, and almost depending on arbitrary will. The present work, on the contrary, is addressed to those who are already sufficiently convinced of the certain existence of social laws, and desire only to have them reduced to a true and conclusive system.'

What that system is it would take far more space than we can afford to sketch even in outline. All we can do is to enumerate some of its main positions. They are to be drawn not only from the *Positive Polity*, but from two other works,—the *Positivist Catechism: a Summary Exposition of the Universal Religion, in Twelve Dialogues between a Woman and a Priest of Humanity;* and second, *The Subjective Synthesis* (1856), which is the first and only volume of a work upon mathematics announced at the end of the *Positive Philosophy.* The system for which the *Positive Philosophy* is alleged to have been the scientific preparation contains a Polity and a Religion; a complete arrangement of life in all its aspects, giving a wider sphere to Intellect, Energy, and Feeling than could be found in any of the previous organic types,—Greek, Roman, or Catholic-feudal. Comte's immense superiority over such præ-Revolutionary utopians as the Abbé Saint Pierre, no less than over the group of post-revolutionary utopians, is especially visible in his firm grasp of the cardinal truth that the improvement of

the social organism can only be effected by a moral development, and never by any changes in mere political mechanism, or any violences in the way of an artificial redistribution of wealth. A moral transformation must precede any real advance. The aim, both in public and private life, is to secure to the utmost possible extent the victory of the social feeling over self-love, or Altruism over Egoism. This is the key to the regeneration of social existence, as it is the key to that unity of individual life which makes all our energies converge freely and without wasteful friction towards a common end. What are the instruments for securing the preponderance of Altruism? Clearly they must work from the strongest element in human nature, and this element is Feeling or the Heart. Under the Catholic system the supremacy of Feeling was abused, and the intellect was made its slave. Then followed a revolt of Intellect against Sentiment. The business of the new system will be to bring back the Intellect into a condition, not of slavery, but of willing ministry to the Feelings. The subordination never was, and never will be, effected except by means of a religion, and a religion, to be final, must include a harmonious synthesis of all our conceptions of the external order of the universe. The characteristic basis of a religion is the existence of a Power without us, so superior to ourselves as to command the complete submission of our whole life. This basis is to be found in the Positive stage, in Humanity, past, present, and to come, conceived as the Great Being.

A deeper study of the great universal order reveals to us at length the ruling power within it of the true Great Being, whose destiny it is to bring that order continually to perfection by constantly conforming to its laws, and which thus best represents to us that system as a whole. This undeniable Providence, the supreme dispenser of our destinies, becomes in the natural course the common centre of our affections, our thoughts, and our actions. Although this Great Being evidently exceeds the utmost strength of any, even of any collective, human force, its necessary constitution and its peculiar function endow it with the truest sympathy towards all its servants. The least amongst us can and ought constantly to aspire to maintain and even to improve this Being. This natural object of all our activity, both public and private, determines the true general character of the rest of our existence, whether in feeling or in thought; which must be devoted to love, and to know, in order rightly to serve, our Providence, by a wise use of all the means which it furnishes to us. Reciprocally this continued service, while strengthening our true unity, renders us at once both happier and better.

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The exaltation of Humanity into the throne occupied by the Supreme Being under monotheistic systems made all the rest of Comte's construction easy enough. Utility remains the test of every institution, impulse, act; his fabric becomes substantially an arch of utilitarian propositions, with an artificial Great Being inserted at the top to keep them in their place. The Comtist system is utilitarianism crowned by a fantastic decoration. Translated into the plainest English, the position is as follows: 'Society can only be regenerated by the greater subordination of politics to morals, by the moralisation of capital, by the renovation of the

family, by a higher conception of marriage, and so on. These ends can only be reached by a heartier development of the sympathetic instincts. The sympathetic instincts can only be developed by the Religion of Humanity.' Looking at the problem in this way, even a moralist who does not expect theology to be the instrument of social revival, might still ask whether the sympathetic instincts will not necessarily be already developed to their highest point, before people will be persuaded to accept the religion, which is at bottom hardly more than sympathy under a more imposing name. However that may be, the whole battle—into which we shall not enter—as to the legitimateness of Comtism as a religion turns upon this erection of Humanity into a Being. The various hypotheses, dogmas, proposals, as to the family, to capital, etc. are merely propositions measurable by considerations of utility and a balance of expediencies. Many of these proposals are of the highest interest, and many of them are actually available; but there does not seem to be one of them of an available kind which could not equally well be approached from other sides, and even incorporated in some radically antagonistic system. Adoption, for example, as a practice for improving the happiness of families and the welfare of society, is capable of being weighed, and can in truth only be weighed by utilitarian considerations, and has been commended by men to whom the Comtist religion is naught. The singularity of Comte's construction, and the test by which it must be tried,

is the transfer of the worship and discipline of Catholicism to a system in which 'the conception of God is superseded' by the abstract idea of Humanity, conceived as a kind of Personality.

And when all is said, the invention does not help us. We have still to settle what *is* for the good of Humanity, and we can only do that in the old-fashioned way. There is no guidance in the conception. No effective unity can follow from it, because you can only find out the right and wrong of a given course by summing up the advantages and disadvantages, and striking a balance, and there is nothing in the Religion of Humanity to force two men to find the balance on the same side. The Comtists are no better off than other utilitarians in judging policy, events, conduct.

The particularities of the worship, its minute and truly ingenious re-adaptation of sacraments, prayers, reverent signs, down even to the invocation of a new Trinity, need not detain us. They are said, though it is not easy to believe, to have been elaborated by way of Utopia. If so, no Utopia has ever yet been presented in a style so little calculated to stir the imagination, to warm the feelings, to soothe the insurgency of the reason. It is a mistake to present a great body of hypotheses—if Comte meant them for hypotheses—in the most dogmatic and peremptory form to which language can lend itself. And there is no more extraordinary thing in the history of opinion than the perversity with which Comte has succeeded in clothing a philosophic doctrine, so intrin-

sically conciliatory as his, in a shape that excites so little sympathy and gives so much provocation. An enemy defined Comtism as Catholicism *minus* Christianity, to which an able champion retorted by calling it Catholicism *plus* Science. Hitherto Comte's Utopia has pleased the followers of the Catholic, just as little as those of the scientific spirit.

The elaborate and minute systematisation of life, proper to the religion of Humanity, is to be directed by a priesthood. The priests are to possess neither wealth nor material power; they are not to command, but to counsel; their authority is to rest on persuasion, not on force. When religion has become positive and society industrial, then the influence of the church upon the state becomes really free and independent, which was not the case in the Middle Age. The power of the priesthood rests upon special knowledge of man and nature; but to this intellectual eminence must also be added moral power and a certain greatness of character, without which force of intellect and completeness of attainment will not receive the confidence they ought to inspire. The functions of the priesthood are of this kind:—To exercise a systematic direction over education; to hold a consultative influence over all the important acts of actual life, public and private; to arbitrate in cases of practical conflict; to preach sermons recalling those principles of generality and universal harmony which our special activities dispose us to ignore; to order the due classification of society. To perform the various ceremonies ap-

pointed by the founder of the religion. The authority of the priesthood is to rest wholly on voluntary adhesion, and there is to be perfect freedom of speech and discussion; though, by the way, we cannot forget Comte's detestable congratulations to the Czar Nicholas on the 'wise vigilance' with which he kept watch over the importation of Western books.

From his earliest manhood Comte had been powerfully impressed by the necessity of elevating the condition of women (see remarkable passage in his letters to M. Valat, pp. 84-87). His friendship with Madame de Vaux had deepened the impression, and in the reconstructed society women are to play a highly important part. They are to be carefully excluded from public action, but they are to do many more important things than things political. To fit them for their functions, they are to be raised above material cares, and they are to be thoroughly educated. The family, which is so important an element of the Comtist scheme of things, exists to carry the influence of woman over man to the highest point of cultivation. Through affection she purifies the activity of man. 'Superior in power of affection, more able to keep both the intellectual and the active powers in continual subordination to feeling, women are formed as the natural intermediaries between Humanity and man. The Great Being confides specially to them its moral Providence, maintaining through them the direct and constant cultivation of universal affection, in the midst of all the distractions of thought or action, which are

for ever withdrawing men from its influence. . . . Beside the uniform influence of every woman on every man, to attach him to Humanity, such is the importance and the difficulty of this ministry that each of us should be placed under the special guidance of one of these angels, to answer for him, as it were, to the Great Being. This moral guardianship may assume three types,—the mother, the wife, and the daughter; each having several modifications, as shown in the concluding volume. Together they form the three simple modes of solidarity, or unity with contemporaries,—obedience, union, and protection,—as well as the three degrees of continuity between ages, by uniting us with the past, the present, and the future. In accordance with my theory of the brain, each corresponds with one of our three altruistic instincts,—veneration, attachment, and benevolence.

How the positive method of observation and verification of real facts has landed us in this, and much else of the same kind, is extremely hard to guess. Seriously to examine an encyclopædic system, that touches life, society, and knowledge at every point, is evidently beyond the compass of such an article as this. There is in every chapter a whole group of speculative suggestions, each of which would need a long chapter to itself to elaborate or to discuss. There is at least one biological speculation of astounding audacity that could be examined in nothing less than a treatise. Perhaps we have said enough to show that after performing a great and real service to

thought, Comte almost sacrificed his claims to gratitude by the invention of a system that, as such, and independently of detached suggestions, is markedly retrograde. But the world has strong self-protecting qualities. It will take what is available in Comte, while forgetting that in his work which is as irrational in one way as Hegel is in another.

THE END.

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